CBW

Number One
For PSV Professionals

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Wight wash

The Isle of Wight council is now embroiled in an unholy row which threatens the core of its tourism income.

Why? Because it seems to think a major strand of its coach tourism income stream is parking charges, and has doubled them.

With coaching heavyweights like Parrys International now pitching in with the threat of a boycott of the island, you would imagine that Tory councillor Ian Ward - who literally led the charge - would now be feeling contrite. Not a bit of it. His reply to operators who are being asked £60 for four days' use of a square of Tarmac borders on arrogance.

In his reply, published in the Tour News section of this magazine (pages 16-17), he tries to pass the buck to central government, claiming the Local Transport Plan (LTP) is to blame because it demands parking demand management: "...we have doubled car parking charges for the normal motorists and they are still cheaper than mainland resorts," he blusters.

I might point out to him that this is his problem - by his own admittance, car parking is still too cheap. If he wants to resolve congestion and traffic woes, encouraging vehicles which take up three car spaces yet deliver 20 times more tourists would be part of the answer, and hiking parking charges isn't going to endear the Isle of Wight to group tourism.

If operators got something for their £60 it wouldn't be too bad, but every year there's a litany of vandalism because £200,000 vehicles are left at the mercy of every yob on the island - no fences, no CCTV, nothing.

Ian Ward's comments suggest the council really has no idea what LTPs are all about. On top of this, he says that coaches cause 'considerable wear on our roads.' More that 25 cars, Mr Ward?

My deepest concern is that the sub-text to all of this is that the council is getting a bit sniffy about coaches. Well, Mr Ward, ask the hotels and attractions how they survive from Easter to July, and September to November. And be careful what you wish for....

■ Let Ian Ward know what you think about the parking prices on the Isle of Wight at *ian.ward@iow.gov.uk*

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
Editor

Coach and Bus Week is a supporter of the following organisations:

COACH TOURISM COUNCIL
Promoting Travel and Tourism by Coach

ABC

British Travel Trade Fair
1-2 March 2006
NEC, Birmingham

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Tory transport chief slams concessionary fares scheme

Grayling labels chancellor's announcement 'damage limitation'

Andrew Peace, news editor

Conservative shadow transport minister Chris Grayling has launched a blistering attack on the national concessionary scheme, announced last week by chancellor Gordon Brown.

In an exclusive interview with *CBW* he called the announcement a "damage limitation exercise", saying the system contains a huge number of flaws, and that the government had not thought through the consequences before its implementation.

Chris Grayling told *CBW*: "You have the odd situation whereby if your borough boundary lies between you and the neighbouring town you wouldn't be able to travel there because the free pass only goes up to the boundary. There are a huge number of flaws in what the government has done - this scheme has been a classic example of a grand political announcement backed by not nearly enough detail work and understanding the implications of what they were doing.

"My judgement would be that this fanfare announcement of the national scheme was designed to iron that out, to make sure that people could travel across the boundaries without discovering that when the bus turned right at the end of the road that you would have to pay an extra £1.50. I think that is probably why he has done it, so it is a damage limitation exercise in that respect."

Chris Grayling

He says however that he does believe in the principle of free travel for the elderly and disabled: "We cannot provide such a high level of funding to London boroughs and Transport for London for transport and so enable them to provide free fares for everybody and then say to people outside, sorry guys you don't count. We've started down this road so let's have a proper scheme."

Despite only being in the job since December 2005, Grayling demonstrated an impressive grasp of the issues facing the public transport industry. He doubts the government's promise to maintain a 2.25% above the rate of inflation increase in transport spending until 2015; was critical of the funding balance between buses in London and outside; says he is "highly suspicious" about greater powers for city-region authorities; says the road user charging scheme is "probably a far bigger scheme than anything any government has tried before anywhere in the developed world"; sounds a note of caution over biofuels and says there are question marks over the growth of the aviation industry. Read the full interview starting on page 32.

Second operator raises Volvo ESP concerns

Another operator with brand new vehicles on Volvo's B12 chassis is reporting problems with the ESP system.

CBW last week reported on how On A Mission Coaches of Leighton Buzzard experienced an intermittent ESP fault on four new coaches. Now Chalfont Coaches of Harrow, who bought three new Volvo B12M chassied Van Hool T9 Alizees on March 2, says it has the same problem on all three of its coaches. One of the vehicles nearly spun on a roundabout after the brakes applied spontaneously, it claims. After similar incidents on the other vehicles, all three have been withdrawn from service.

Chalfont Coaches managing director Chris Shears told *CBW*: "When you tell people the vehicle applies the brakes without you even touching them, they look at you like you are mad, but that is exactly what is happening."

ESP - electronic stability programme - works by reducing power and braking wheels individually if sensors indicate excess speed when cornering.

The electronics governing ESP are very complex, and rely on a number of different parameters. It is believed that the different wheelbases on different B12 models has affected the ESP calculations and made the system overly sensitive.

On A Mission Coaches, who complained about the fault originally, experienced the problem on Volvo B12B Jonckheeres.

A spokesman for Volvo would only say: "We are aware that Chalfont Coaches has reported a similar problem. We are in contact with all customers with potentially affected vehicles."

Other sources tell *CBW* that Volvo is planning a modification to all affected vehicles. The spokesman would not say how many vehicles this includes.

Rotala agrees deal

Rotala, owner of Flights Hallmark, has conditionally agreed to buy the names 'Central Liner' and 'Central Coachways' from Geoff Flight, former owner of the Flights business and son of the original founder.

The deal values the brand names at £250,000, conditional upon the successful placing of more Rotala shares.

The company says in a statement: "The brand names give the company an established base upon which to add any acquisitions made in the bus market in the Birmingham area."

If the share placing is successful, Rotala also intends to pay the outstanding monies due to CPS (see *CBW*, January 12) and buy the freehold of Flights' Birmingham property for £2 million.

Rotala owns Flights Hallmark

The property is owned by Frank Flight and Geoffrey Flight. The latter was made a director of Flights Hallmark and Flights Corporate Transfers in October 2005. He bought 3% of the share capital at the placing - and has an option on a further 3%.

Yvette Cooper and Stephen Ladyman on the Fastrack service

Kent Fastrack launch

The first phase of Fastrack in Kent was officially launched last Thursday by transport minister Stephen Ladyman, and minister for housing and planning Yvette Cooper.

The first phase of Fastrack extends for 9.3 miles, linking Dartford and Gravesend town centres via Bluewater and Greenhithe. On this route, 3.5 miles of almost continuous busway and priority lanes have been provided between Dartford and Bluewater. Overall, half of all Fastrack routes will operate on dedicated busways with a further 25% on reserved lanes alongside traffic on existing roads.

Kent Council Council says this is the first time in any large-scale regeneration area that a public transport system is being developed ahead of the new developments it will serve.

Yvette Cooper said: "It is very important, with any development of this nature, to put the infrastructure in at the beginning, which is why the Fastrack system is so important. The development will create a sustainable future and will provide for the next generation as well as people already living here."

Shamrock to close depot

Shamrock Travel in South Wales announced the closure of its Bridgend depot as *CBW* went to press.

The company says the closure is down to loss of contracts in the Bridgend area, and that the depot will shut on April 8.

The company had held around half of the local service bus contracts, but has dropped to around 20% following the latest round of tenders. The Bridgend depot housed 20 vehicles, only 12 of which are needed for the remaining contracts. All staff and vehicles will transfer to Shamrock's Barry and Pontcynon depots.

Owner Clayton Jones says: "It is with great sadness that the depot is closing, but we feel maintaining a depot the size of our facilities at Bridgend has become unsustainable for the number of vehicles involved. We have decided that by operating the few remaining routes from our Barry depot, we can concentrate on vehicle investment and offer better vehicles for the people of Bridgend."

Mr Jones told *CBW* that the majority of the work has gone to operators not previously involved in stagecarriage work. He says Shamrock's bids were "very competitive".

First wave of EYMS 2006 fleet arrives

Hull-based East Yorkshire Motor Services has taken delivery of the first of its three orders for new buses and coaches in 2006. In addition, nine coaches are being added to its various subsidiaries and total orders are worth around £4m.

Six double-deck Volvo B7TL, bodied by Wrights, provide a further upgrade for the busy Hull to Scarborough route, and will work the highest mileages in the fleet, covering over 80,000 miles every year. They follow a similar purchase of 12 Wright Gemini double-deckers delivered last year, and take the total of fully accessible buses in the whole East Yorkshire/Scarborough & District fleet of 310 to 50%.

Further deliveries expected later this year include a further six Volvo single-deckers bodied by Wrights, and six Plaxton Primo midibuses earmarked for Bridlington local services.

EYMS chairman Peter Shipp said that although trading conditions are very difficult because of high pension and fuel costs, and tough competition in Manchester, the company still needs to invest as much as it can afford in new vehicles, to improve travel for passengers and drivers, and reduce engineering costs and pollution by replacing its oldest vehicles.

He said: "These orders confirm our intention to continue to provide our customers with the most modern bus and coach fleet in the area."

EYMS has taken delivery of six Volvo B7TLs

Briefly

Stagecoach is reportedly embroiled in a bus war with UK North/GM Buses in Manchester, leading to problems with congestion in the city centre because both companies are piling so many vehicles on to services. A statement from the council and GMPTA says the situation is "totally unacceptable" and calls on the traffic commissioner to "resolve the situation without delay".

Directors at regional development agency ONE NorthEast have refused to step in and fill the concessionary travel funding shortfall on Tyneside. Local government minister Phil Woolas urged the agency to pay the money as a "one-off" to help students hit by fare increases. But ONE North East turned down the request saying it did not want to set a precedent for bailing out government schemes in the future.

Figures uncovered by the *Sunday Mercury* in Birmingham reveal some startling public transport speeding statistics. Buses in the area have been caught speeding at 70mph in 50mph zones, and 80mph in 60mph zones. A total of 329 drivers were fined for speeding in the region in 2005. Safety camera partnerships at TfL and Cambridgeshire told *CBW* they did not keep separate statistics for coaches and buses.

Centro, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, is to merge with the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority, to be called Centro-PTA. The move, first proposed last summer, is designed to make the body more efficient.

Fifteen people were hurt, two seriously, after a minibus crashed on the A14 in Northamptonshire last Saturday. The Renault minibus was on the A14 westbound, approaching junction 19 of the M1 when a tyre blew out. The minibus hit the back of a lorry, and rolled down a grass bank.

BUSES

First Glasgow's two operating companies have seen their licences reduced from a combined 1,405 to 1,165

First feels heat from public inquiries

Group's operations hit by licence reductions

Andrew Peace, news editor

First Group operations have been hit by the results of long-running public inquiries. First Edinburgh has been formally warned over its maintenance standards, and has voluntarily reduced its licence from 375 vehicles to 230 vehicles following public inquiries in December 2004 and October 2005. Midland Bluebird, which also operates in Edinburgh, had its licence reduced to 297 vehicles from 460.

Meanwhile, First Glasgow's two operating companies, First Glasgow No1 and No2, have had their licences reduced to 780 vehicles, from 855, and 385, from 550, respectively, for an indefinite period, following public inquiry in August 2005.

The licence cuts in all cases are well below peak vehicle requirements, and services will not be affected.

The Edinburgh inquiries heard a catalogue of maintenance failures, including two wheel-loss incidents in June 2005, and another in May 2004. In December 2004, the public inquiry heard that the company had been issued with 16 immediate prohibitions, and 51 delayed, which will stay on the record for a five year period. A total of 210 defects on First Buses were discovered by inspectors in 2004.

Traffic commissioner Joan Aitken wrote in her decision: "I have decided to accept these voluntary undertakings as the outcome of this public inquiry. By such reductions the operator signals there is no intention to expand in the immediate to near future." Acknowledging the improvements First has made in the interim, later she wrote: "It is apparent to me that there has been a traumatic awakening within First Group of the need to improve the status and performance of the engineering function."

In response, First Edinburgh managing director Brian Juffs says: "I am satisfied that the traffic commissioner accepted our voluntary undertakings and recognised the improvements we have made.

"Since joining the company last year, I have worked hard with the new management team to improve every aspect of the business, and we have invested millions in new and newer vehicles for the area."

The First Glasgow inquiry last August heard that the two companies had attracted 180 prohibitions in five years. Again persuaded that the company had made significant changes and improvements to its maintenance procedures, Ms Aitken wrote: "On the evidence I have heard of investment and highly positive activity towards achieving the licence undertakings, I am convinced that I can deal with this matter by a variation on this licence, but not to such a level that the present operation is affected in practical terms."

First Group says services will not be affected

First results 'in line with expectations'

Ahead of a full announcement on May 17, First Group has released a trading statement, saying that, despite a "challenging trading environment" particularly with respect to fuel costs, its overall results are in line with management expectations.

It says the UK bus division has delivered a robust performance, despite increased costs.

The statement says: "We are very encouraged by strong on-bus revenue growth and improved operational performance, reflecting our focus on service quality and efficiency.

"We have taken a number of actions to mitigate the impact of increased fuel costs and will continue to rigorously manage the business. We are now fully hedged for approximately 38% of our Group fuel consumption for 2006/07.

"Our North America division continues to perform well, delivering consistent growth since we entered the market in 1999. We have continued to see strong contract retention across the three businesses."

It describes performance at its UK rail division as "strong", having won two franchises recently, the Greater Western and Thameslink/Great Northern, and passenger numbers on its First ScotRail and First TransPennine Express franchises growing.

The board has announced that it will continue to grow the dividend by 10% per annum, at least until 2008.

From left to right: Charles Moseby – Wrightbus National Account Manager, Derek Bradley – Lincolnshire RoadCar's Engineering Director and Arthur Argyle – Regional Commercial Manager at Volvo Bus with five of the new Volvo B7TL double decks.

RoadCar's Gemini delivery

Lincs RoadCar last week became the first subsidiary in the Stagecoach group to take delivery of Wright-bodied Gemini 'deckers.

Originally ordered by the Yorkshire Traction Group, the six Volvo B7TLs replace four-year old B7s on the Coastal Connect service 6 between Lincoln and Skegness, which has shown phenomenal passenger growth since it was introduced in 1998, in partnership with the County Council.

Derek Bradley, RoadCar's director of engineering and operations, said that the new buses "looked the business" and were an excellent advertisement for the service.

"Wherever we introduce low floor buses, we see an increase in passengers," he said.

The deckers are fitted with 74 Esteban Civic V2 Club individual seats with leather headrests, LED destination display and a six-camera CCTV system. The 10.6m vehicles have been specified with a Volvo D7C 250hp engine coupled with a ZF 6-speed automatic gearbox

Connect 6 now carries around 7,500 passengers per week in summer and has shown average growth of 109% over the first eight years, which has at times peaked at 167% growth. This latest batch of vehicles brings to 26 the number of B7TL double decks ordered since 2001, with 80 Volvo vehicles in total in the Lincolnshire RoadCar fleet.

Bullocks Coaches' Oxford Road Link in Manchester is the first bus service in the city to use biodiesel. The company uses a 5% blend of the fuel – made from vegetable oil – in regular diesel to cut emissions.

The company consulted with Scania prior to introducing the fuel and reports no problems to date. Using the 5% blend does not invalidate the vehicle's warranty.

Bullocks runs the service with three 2005 Scania OmniCity single deckers and a brand new East Lancs-bodied Scania decker. The buses refuel three times a week at the Green Gold Biodiesel Station, the only facility of its kind in the area, near Piccadilly Station. The service links the railway station with the universities and hospitals on Oxford Road and is financially supported by all these institutions.

Bus mileage stays on course

The proportion of scheduled mileage run on bus services has reached its highest ever level, according to statistics from the Department for Transport.

Its quarterly passenger satisfaction, bus reliability, age of fleet and patronage statistics were published last week.

The scheduled mileage figure, which excludes factors beyond operators' control, is 99%, on course for the government's target of 99.5%. Other figures - from the CPT's annual survey - show that the average fleet age is down to 7.1 years, well inside the agreed target of eight years. Overall satisfaction on bus journeys was 80%, down two points from its previous record high. Satisfaction with reliability was up 1%, to 69 out of 100, the highest value recorded for this measure, as was the 70 out of 100 score for satisfaction with bus stop information.

Briefly

Warwickshire MP Jeremy Wright is to investigate claims that working blind people will be worse off under the new concessionary travel scheme. The service is not available until 09:30. The MP will meet with county councillors this week to discuss the issue.

First Group bosses in Aberdeen are reportedly facing more delays over their plans to build a new global HQ in the city. The Scottish Executive says it has only just received the paperwork on the case which has been dragging on for over six months. The Executive will now appoint a Reporter to oversee the public inquiry into the controversial building, which will take between 9-12 months. First had originally wanted the HQ to open in summer 2007.

Pupils in Denbigh were without transport to school on Friday after vandalism temporarily halted the service. The council says the closure was a "drastic but necessary step." Pupils had recently torn trim from the windows and stolen safety equipment. The service was due to re-open on Monday, but will be reviewed on a day-to-day basis.

A mother in Kent has collected a 500-signature petition to lower bus fares. She currently drives her 12-year-old son four miles to school each day to save buying the full adult fare of £17.50/ week.

The launch of East Lancs' new single-decker 'Esteem' is imminent. The company is also working on a double-decker on the MAN chassis, due for launch at the Euro Bus Expo at Birmingham's NEC in November.

Wolverhampton's newly refurbished bus station has come up trumps with passengers. 88% of people surveyed said it gives a good or very good impression of the city and 84% of passengers say they feel safer.

COACHES

Simonds invests £2.75m in new site

Norfolk operator plans fleet overhaul after state-of-the-art depot change

Mark Williams, editor

Norfolk operator Simonds of Botesdale has settled into a new state-of-the-art depot and is about to embark on a fleet replacement programme.

The rural bus and coach operator has sold off its two previous sites – in Botesdale and Diss – and invested £2.75 million is a purpose-built facility which has a VOSA-accredited MOT test centre and even offers conference facilities for businesses in Diss.

"We started looking around for another base six or seven years ago," says Martyn Simonds, the third generation of Simonds to run the business. "Things were getting cramped in the other depots, and we needed to take the next step."

The five-acre freehold Greenfield site has been four years in the making, starting with architects who have designed it entirely to the specification outlined by the Simonds family and team. The task was made doubly difficult, and £150,000 more expensive, by the proximity of a wildlife corridor.

"There are environmental sensitivities here," said Mr Simonds. "Because of the large area of concrete, the surface water goes into a holding tank underground instead of all rushing straight to the river. The tank itself is huge – about 100 metres long by seven metres wide, and two metres deep. It's constructed from stacked 'crates' to provide a stable surface."

The facility offers the last word in security, with card access through rising barriers into the compound, car park and offices, and CCTV covering every inch of the yard. There are three service lines, one dedicated to MOT with rolling road brake tester and emissions testing, and a fourth equipped with an 18-metre paint booth, which can be split into 12- and 6-metre bays.

There's a double-deck high bus wash, chassis cleaning bay, extensive parts storage and the jewel in the crown, a plush office area with smart customer reception, and a large conference room which is already attracting business from banks and other businesses around Diss.

Simonds has taken the view that virtually every facility on the site is for hire: "The MOT facility is now attracting heavy-vehicle operators from about a 15-mile radius," said Mr Simonds. "We can MOT the lot – coaches, buses, HGVs, artics, horse boxes and trailers.

"We got Tier 1 VOSA approval in December, and the agency is on site twice a week. The advantage for operators over a VOSA facility is that we can correct defects on site."

The coach wash can be hired and the chassis wash, to be completed soon, will also be available to local businesses.

Simonds currently runs 43 vehicles, 10 of which are service buses on supported routes, and 29 of which are its favoured Volvo-chassis coaches. Two of its early Commer coaches are awaiting restoration.

Martyn Simonds, left, in his new office. Simonds' impressive new base in Diss replaces its two old depots

"We've put some vehicle investment on hold while we built the new depot, but we are now a bit light at the top end of the fleet," said Mr Simonds. "We'll be making some decisions about vehicle investment soon."

The range of work at Simonds covers the whole gamut, from stage carriage through schools to its own tours and excursions, plus private hire and touring contracts.

Top: The new depot hosts a VOSA-accredited MOT test centre. Above and right, no excuses for dirty coaches, with both a chassis and coach wash on site

Parrys pitches into Wight parking row

Parrys International has waded into the row about Isle of Wight coach parking charges, and threatened to stop visiting the island.

The Cheslyn Hay operator has written to the IoW tourism office highlighting its concerns about the doubling of coach parking charges, up to £60 for four days and £100 for a week (see Tour News, pages 16 and 17).

"Surely the council cannot justify price rises of this extortionate nature?" asks MD Dave Parry. "Tourism in the Isle of Wight is reliant to some part on incoming coaches, and we feel that these rises do not make the island a coach-friendly and inviting location.

"Instead, rises like this only make it obvious that coaches are not welcome, and we will have to review our intentions for next year."

Talking to *CBW*, Mr Parry said the principle matters more than the cost: "I won't book anything on the island until this is resolved," he said. "I am in the business of providing tourists for the Isle of Wight, and if there was any common sense coach parking would be free.

"It's not as if what's there is very good - space is very cramped and there's no security."

Fraser Eagle to run trains

Rail replacement broker Fraser Eagle Group is funding rail operator Grand Central, which will be running trains along the East Coast Main Line from next year.

The decision to award Grand Central the franchise to run trains from Sunderland and Hartlepool to London Kings Cross was confirmed a fortnight ago but the major shareholder of the new company was only confirmed after speculation. Fraser Eagle's rail replacement services have recently come in for fierce competition.

"Operationally and commercially, Fraser Eagle has a wealth of people on board that have worked in the railway, and related industries, for many years," said its MD Kevin Dean. "Our backing of Grand Central is part of our strategy to consolidate our position as a transport group and move into other forms of transport provision."

Lancashire-based Fraser Eagle Group has several strands, including providing business continuity planning, interior design and hotel refurbishment. But its coach brokering saw it last year run 60,000 coach journeys on rail replacement and 180,000 taxi trips. It says it moves an average 60,000 people per day, and takes on other major coach movements including events transport management.

Grand Central - which has Fraser Eagle as its major shareholder - is expected to provide competition for GNER, which currently charges as much as £187 for a standard peak return from York to London, and £307 first class.

WA Shearings sells off hotels

WA Shearings has sold off - and is leasing back - 39 of its hotels to raise £110m.

The deal saw the hotels go to the Moorfields Group, which is expanding its portfolio of hotel properties, but leaves WA Shearings still in charge with the lease arrangement. The money raised is being used to repay debt incurred when Shearings merged with Wallace Arnold last year.

Briefly

Five vacancies for the Coach Tourism Council's board will be filled this weekend at the CTC/Bonded Coach Holidays Conference and AGM in Llandudno, North Wales. Candidates are John White, from Ellen Smith; David Leathem, Ulsterbus Tours; Chris Roberts, Diamond Holidays; Ian Underwood, Effingham Minibuses; Sean Taggart, Albatross Travel Group; Chris Vander, Towergate Chapman Stevens; Chris Wakefield, Tourmaster Direct; Simone Roche, Blackpool Pleasure Beach; Melissa Ronson, Red Funnel Ferries; Pat Williams, SeaFrance; and Nuria Vinuesa, Best Western Hotels. The vote is by secret ballot of membership.

Megabus.com has expanded its service along a new Edinburgh-Newcastle-Sheffield-London corridor, with two return departures a day at fares starting at £1. The Stagecoach operation has also launched a Cwmbran-Bristol-London service on twice-daily frequency, and has increased departures on Bournemouth-London, Portsmouth-London and Southampton-London. megabus.com now serves 40 UK cities, and last week announced a launch into the USA.

Lakeside Coaches of Ellesmere has invested £1 million in a new depot in the town's business park, after years of searching for a new site, and six months' building work. The new site has a large office/workshop building, coach wash, refuelling lanes and a large parking area. The launch was celebrated by 150 people last week including Shropshire MP Owen Paterson, who officially opened the depot. Lakeside's fleet was previously split between three sites in the area.

London's St Pauls Coach Park is to be closed from next week (April 10) until June for development. Corporation of London has laid on additional parking bays in Queen Victoria Street while the work takes place.

DRIVERS

Diabetes rules may be relaxed

New research may signal a relaxation of the rules on drivers with certain types of diabetes.

A study has shown that sufferers of Type II diabetes using insulin may not be as prone to blackouts as was previously thought, and that they may now be allowed to hold lorry and bus licences.

Road safety minister Stephen Ladyman said: "This is interesting research which we will need to consider carefully. We plan to get the research peer reviewed to check the validity of the findings as there are potentially serious implications for driving licence entitlement."

People using insulin are not currently entitled to hold a Group 2 (bus and lorry) licence. This is because of increased risk from episodes of insulin-induced low blood glucose when the sight can be impaired and there is the possibility of loss of consciousness.

There are two main types of diabetes: Type I diabetes tends to occur in younger people and needs insulin treatment from the start. Type II is more common later in life and is normally managed with diet alone, but can be treated with tablets or, occasionally, insulin. The research found that with Type II sufferers, the incidence of low blood glucose events was the same for people being treated with tablets as with insulin.

Buzzlines has bought a third 13.2-metre, three-axle Setra 416GT HD Comfort Class coach, pictured here with driver Chris Hunt. The Buzzlines-blue coach has manual transmission, 49 seats for the additional legroom, satellite navigation and 240v supply points so that passengers can power-up their laptop computers. Buzzlines Coaches director Nigel Busbridge said: "We are committed to maintaining a top class fleet of coaches with the latest comfort and safety features for all our passengers and drivers."

Book boost for drivers

Transport for London and the BBC have set up a reading group for drivers at Stockwell Bus Garage.

Authors like Ruth Rendell and Maeve Binchey have written specially commissioned short books for the BBC's Reading and Writing campaign, called RaW, which is aimed at people who already read, but may speak English as a second language, or who have got out of the habit.

Driver Horatio Teixeira, 42, has been driving for five years and said: "I am always trying to improve my English and so am enjoying taking part in this. I have read two book so far, usually in my coffee breaks."

Ops manager Graham Johnson said: "The aim was to encourage those that didn't read so much and support them as they developed their writing skills."

Stockwell Bus Garage, one of Go Ahead's largest in London, has 586 drivers and 200 buses.

Malcolm Day, 65, has been driving for 44 years

Malcolm calls it a Day

Stagecoach in Warwickshire's longest serving driver has retired after 44 years service.

Malcolm Day, 65, joined the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company (Midland Red) in 1962 at Nuneaton garage, and became one of the elite group of drivers who drove the fast Motorway Coaches to London. Malcolm has been married to Margaret for 40 years, has one daughter and has fostered an incredible 56 children.

Malcolm drove his own guests to his retirement party in a 40-year-old Midland Red D9 decker.

Briefly

A London bus driver has been jailed for 15 months for killing a pedestrian after running a red light. Iffat Chaudhry, 37, was working overtime – although inside his driver hours – when he lost concentration, ran through the red light and hit Zohal Qayoom, 14, in Golders Green in March 2005. He pleaded guilty to causing death by dangerous driving. The judge said: "Any court would have appalling difficulty in trying to fix a sentence on a respectable member of the public driving a vehicle without any intention to cause harm but who has killed another human being."

Drivers at London Central's Bexleyheath garage are the latest to be issued with DNA testing kits to tackle spitting. Karl Blair, general manager, says, "Spitting is an extremely offensive form of assault and we will be actively pursuing any offenders identified." Bexleyheath Garage operates 160 buses for TfL, and employs 420 drivers.

A bus driver is Salisbury has been jailed for downloading indecent images of children. Philip Llorca, 56, was arrested after a tip-off from US investigators. Police say he had so many images stored on his computer that they "gave up" counting them. Llorca was jailed for one year.

As *CBW* went to press, it was reported that the driver of the second coach involved in the fatal school trip accident in Germany in February is to be charged with manslaughter by the German authorities. The charge is described as a 'bolt from the blue' by the driver, who has never been interviewed by German police about the accident. Three people died as a result of the collision.

A bus driver in Cheltenham is stable in hospital after falling ill at the wheel last week. He managed to stop the bus without injuring any passengers.

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Regional News

CBW takes a look at the big issues where you live in our round-up of the regions. If you've got a local issue you would like us to cover, contact Andrew Peace at *andrew.peace@rouncymedia.co.uk*

SCOTLAND

Complaints to the **Scottish Bus User Complaints Tribunal** (BUCT) increased by 30% last year, while complaints resolved prior to being considered by BUCT jumped by 106%.

The BUCT Annual Report, presented to the Scottish Parliament last Thursday, showed complaints rose from 126 in 2004, to 164 in 2005.

Malcolm Stewart, Convener of BUCT, said: "While recognising the investment by operators in their complaints handling procedures it must be of concern that relevant complaints have increased by 30%. However, it is gratifying to note that BUCT has become an established medium through which passengers can seek satisfaction from their complaint and that in turn can produce improvements to bus services. That, after all, is what passengers and indeed Parliament are seeking."

The report also shows that punctuality is the most complained about aspect of services, at 42%. 19% of complaints were about staff. Cases reported to the traffic commissioner fell from 28 to 9 in 2005.

BUCT is calling for its powers to award compensation, currently limited to cash losses, to be reviewed but welcomes the current Scottish Executive consultation on the formation of the Public Transport Users' Committee. The full report is available at *www.buct-scotland.org.uk*

■ Meanwhile there are conflicting reports from Scotland about the implementation of its **Concessionary Travel** scheme. The Scottish Executive describes the level of uptake as "fantastic", with 90% of the holders of the existing concessionary card (750,000 people) having applied for the National Entitlement Card. It says 97% of those people should have received their cards as the scheme went live last Saturday. However, pensioners' groups are said to be concerned about a backlog of applications. Around 1,000 pensioners in Edinburgh are still waiting, despite some of those having applied last November. Existing passes will be valid until June, but only within the city limits. The Scottish scheme covers scheduled coach services as well as local bus services.

■ **Travel Dundee** has issued staff with commemorative ties to celebrate winning the Scottish Public Transport Operator of the Year at the 2005 Scottish Transport Awards last November.

The company has distributed 500 of the navy blue ties, featuring a specially commissioned winner's logo, among employees in the city.

NORTH

The second **South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan** is predicting ridership in the region will continue to fall over the next five years. More than 11 million passenger journeys have been lost in the last decade, with bus and rail journeys to work dropping from 17% in 1995 to 11% last year.

The report says: "The targets focus on slowing the rate of decline rather than an upward reversal of a downward trend. The bus patronage target will represent a modest increase in passenger numbers, possibly our biggest challenge given the background of steady decline."

Congestion busting ideas in the report include better enforcement of bus lanes by using cameras, junction improvements at hotspots, better use of technology and more controls on parking.

WALES

Ridership in Wales has increased by 2% since the introduction of **Concessionary Travel** – in sharp contrast to the rest of the UK outside London where passenger numbers are falling.

As a result, says Andrew Davies, the Welsh minister for transport, marginal services have been saved. He also announced the Welsh Assembly was looking into providing half price travel for 16-18 year olds, and that councils have been given an extra £9.2m to support bus services and community transport.

The minister said: "Free bus travel, and subsidised bus travel for teenagers transforms lives, enabling people to get about with an ease they never thought possible."

MIDLANDS

Banga Buses in Wolverhampton is engaged in a bitter battle with **Centro** over alleged falsification of travelcard and concessionary travel records.

Centro has suspended payments until its investigation is complete, meanwhile Banga Buses has stopped accepting Centro travelcards, and started legal proceedings to recover money it says it is owed.

First in the Potteries is introducing ID cards for under-16s

Centro spokesman Mik Barton said: "Centro has launched an investigation into claims that the company was claiming reimbursements for passengers it wasn't carrying. We are also looking at allegations of claims for carrying passengers using concessionary passes that no longer exist."

Banga solicitor Martin Arthur says the company's owner Parkash Banga denies the allegations and claims Centro has been underpaying him for more than five years. He said: "He has stopped accepting the cards because he says Centro owes him so much money."

■ **Centro**, **Travel Coventry** and Coventry City Council were confronted with an angry group of passengers at a routine

Briefly

Taxis in Darlington will be allowed to use selected bus lanes for a trial period starting 10 April following a successful safety audit. The Council nodded through the proposal to enable taxis, as a form of public transport says the Council, to provide a quicker service, and reduce congestion in normal traffic flow.

The Greater London Authority Transport Grant will be £2,389m for 2006/07, according to a DfT statement. This is the money paid to Transport for London by the Government. The grant was £2,180.468m in 2005/06.

Briefly

First PMT in Stafford has an Optare Tempo on trial for two weeks, before it moves to its Chester Depot for a further fortnight. First PMT will be getting 20 new and nearly new buses this year, as part of a £1.5m investment.

Bristol's 'Reclaim the Buses' campaign reportedly drew over 100 protestors to a rally outside the city's council house last week. The meeting was addressed by Dick North, a veteran of the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1963 which reversed the Bristol Omnibus decision not to employ ethnic minorities. The protestors want the city's buses to be returned to public ownership and are calling for cheaper bus fares, reliable services, greater route coverage and better pay and working conditions for drivers.

Secretary of State for Transport Alistair Darling was in Birmingham last week to open the new £160m National Traffic Control Centre (NTCC) on the M5 near Quinton. Operational in time for the Easter holidays, the centre will provide an overview of the entire 4,500-mile motorway and trunk road network in the UK.

First PMT in Stafford is giving a trial to an Optare Tempo for a fortnight

transport users forum meeting last week, upset over changes to the bus network in the city. The meeting was so well attended - 100 people turned up instead of the expected dozen - it had to be moved into the council chamber. The protestors claim that neither Centro nor Travel Coventry consulted properly on 20 changes, timed to coincide with the reopening of the Pool Meadow bus station.

First in the Potteries is introducing an Under 16 identity card that will include a photograph of the holder and which will be available free of charge. Production to the driver will guarantee child fare.

"Many of today's under-16s look much older than they actually are," said Paul De Santis, First's commercial director for services in North Staffordshire and South Cheshire. "We want to remove the possibility of any future quarrels between drivers and customers at the bus stop."

SOUTH EAST

Oxford Bus Company has recently introduced a large series of 'OXF' personalised number plates bought from DVLA Personalised Registrations.

Around half the company's vehicles now carry OXF plates - the latest of which can be seen on 10 new Mercedes-Benz Citaro single deck buses operating within Oxford and its surrounding areas.

Managing director Philip Kirk said: "We take a lot of pride in the city we serve and what better way to reflect this than the OXF registrations. All our purchases have been made through DVLA due to the sheer range of choice available, price and the speed and ease of ordering."

Salisbury district council has reversed its decision to start its **Concessionary Travel** scheme at 0930hrs. Following complaints, pensioners and the disabled will be able to travel free at any time, and on any service that starts and ends in Wiltshire.

Councillor Dennis Brown says: "Many rural residents have contacted us to say that if they cannot catch a bus before 9.30am, they could not get another bus for a few hours. We have therefore decided to take £57,000 from our car parking reserves account to get over this problem without passing any burden onto the council tax."

The council has also pledged to make a growth bid so an unrestricted service can be funded in 2007/08 as well.

One of the new OXF plates

Roadworks

M74 Hamilton
Until May 12: Contraflow and roadworks on M74 both ways at J5 A725 (Raith Interchange).

M8 Renfrewshire
Until May 10: Delays and slip road closed westbound at J27 A741 (Arkleston).

M9 Linlithgow
Until April 17: One lane closed both ways between J3 A803 (Linlithgow) and J4 A801 (Lathallan).

M90 Fife
Until May 1: Narrow lanes southbound at J1 A921 / A985 (Admiralty).

M56 Cheshire
Until April 30: Lane closed on exit slip road westbound at J7 A556 (Bowdon).

M1 Hertfordshire
Until December 31 2008: Speed restriction of 40 mph and narrow lanes both ways between J6A M25 and J10 M1 (Luton Airport).

M11 Cambridgeshire
Until May 1: Speed restriction of 40mph both ways between J9 A11 (Newmarket Turnoff) and J8 A120 / A1250 / B1256 (Stansted Airport / Bishops Stortford).

M4 Wiltshire
Between 0900 and 0600 Monday-Friday until April 30: Lane closed on exit slip road both ways at J15 A419 (Swindon East).

M4 South Gloucestershire
Between 2100 and 0530 until April 27: Roadworks at night and barrier repairs both ways at J20 M5 (Almondsbury Interchange/M5).

M48 South Gloucestershire
Between 0930 and 1600 until April 30: Lane closed and speed restriction 40 mph both ways at J1 A403 / B4461 (Aust).

M5 North Somerset
Until July 31: Speed restriction both ways between J19 A369 (Portishead) and J20 B3133 (Clevedon).

A39 Somerset
Until May 21: Road closed both ways between B3135 and A37.

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IRELAND

'Final piece of the jigsaw'

Irish transport minister offers glimmer of hope for Dublin independents

Gabriel Conway, Irish correspondent

The publication of the long-awaited report on the Dublin Bus network has been hailed as an opportunity for growth and reform both by the Coach Tourism and Transport Council (CTTC) representing private operators, and the state-run Bus Atha Cliath (Dublin Bus) which commissioned the network review from MVA Associates.

Irish transport minister Martin Cullen has welcomed the publication of the review, which he has described as "the final missing piece in the jigsaw" which will allow him to finalise his plans for reform of the market in Dublin, and bring proposals to cabinet.

He said: "I am committed to the delivery of a high-quality, effective public transport system and Transport 21 is testimony to this. I am also committed to modernising the regulatory framework governing public transport, not just in Dublin, but nationally."

"In particular, at the launch of Transport 21, I said I was convinced that we need a new approach to transport in the Greater Dublin Area, delivered through a single authority with the power to ensure joined-up thinking and delivery across all transport modes.

"In advancing the regulatory agenda, discussions have taken place with the key stakeholders. These discussions form part of a process of engagement that will facilitate and inform the determination of the appropriate structure for the new framework and supporting legislation. I would hope to be in a position to publish legislation on the matter in the current year."

The report, although commissioned by Dublin Bus at the request of the minister, is neutral as to who should operate the hundreds of extra buses it says are needed in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). "We are simply providing the framework for the required growth of bus services," a spokesperson for MVA stated at the publication of the report. "We have shown what the network needs are, going forward to 2011, we are saying that these are the changes, and the new routes, and the extra buses that are needed, but we do not specify that they must be operated by the existing Dublin Bus company."

Irish transport minister Martin Cullen says the new report will allow him to finalise his plans for reform of the Dublin market

Speaking about the publication of the review Joe Meagher, Dublin Bus managing director, said: "The findings of this review provide a clear, accurate picture of the environment Dublin Bus operates within, it details the important role that the bus currently plays in the city and provides a blueprint for the future of the bus as a means to improving the lot of the public transport user. This is of course based on the assumption that hundreds of additional buses are introduced into the network."

He added: "The report identifies improvements that we as a company have to make and which we will. Dublin Bus is a solutions provider and this review has assisted us in developing a realistic, deliverable plan to increase our passenger numbers by 15 million per annum within three years, expand the network to new areas, reduce journey times and increase frequency."

MVA carried out an extensive study process of the internal operations of BAC such as fleet, trend data, customer studies and the external surroundings of the city, congestion, traffic management and the impact of major developments.

The review has identified a number of key issues, which will need to be addressed if the expectations of the public, the government and the company's of further improving the bus services are to be met.

Speaking for the private sector, CTTC chairman Fergal Barton welcomed the publication of the report, and called for the government to use the private sector to provide the resources needed.

He said: "We welcome this review as pointing the way forward, and we would ask to government to consider that the 425 extra buses called for in the plan could be provided by the private sector at a cost of not one single cent to the taxpayer."

However, a stark warning has been issued by the report's authors, of the consequences of proceeding with the review without buy-in from public bodies responsible for road infrastructure and enforcement.

"These changes can only take place if there are some radical additional traffic management measures in the city centre to allow reliable cross linking of services and if the problem of congestion outside the QBC corridors is tackled," the report concludes. "Without such complementary measures there is little point in making the bus network changes."

Dublin – planning for the future

The MVA Dublin Network review analysed existing public and private-sector operation in the Greater Dublin Area, and included extensive consultation with stakeholders (DTO, RPA, County councils, DCBA, and business associations). The review was planned in the context of the Government's Transport 21 commitment of doubling the size of the Quality Bus network and the expansion of rail and Luas networks.

- The key message from all strands of the MVA analysis is that there is a severe lack of capacity on many parts of the bus network. There is also insufficient capacity on the public transport network as a whole.
- That due to extended journey times - that is the spread of the city, people living longer distances from the city and the associated congestion which reduces operating speeds means that there is a loss of efficiency and therefore unexploited potential in the bus network.
- There is limited city centre terminal space, there are currently new areas being developed with 57,000 new house units planned over the next five years, satellite towns such as Blanchardstown have a growing demand for local services.
- The bus network will handle most of the patronage growth in the short term, given the Transport 21 timeline.

After significant study and analysis the authors of the Network Review MVA set out a redefined network concept and provide a staged plan for enhancing the bus network.

Three clear stages are considered, covering the next five years:

STAGE 1:
(2006/2007)
Introduce an excess of 200 additional buses to cater for demand of new developments, which need to be served prior to any rail investment. Significantly enhance the existing QBC's and support the development of the expanded QBC's plans.

STAGE 2:
(2006 to 2009)
Commence the progressive reshaping of the bus network:

- **Substantial increase in cross city services**
- **Development of AVL – automatic vehicle location**
- **Limited stop/express services from outside the M50**
- **Self contained networks in some of the larger towns**
- **A number of high frequency orbital services**
- **Further buses are required to cater for growing demand for the period 2008 – 2011. Current estimates suggest almost 225 additional buses (over and above the 200 required in Stage 1).**

STAGE 3:
(2006 – 2011)
Throughout this time there will be a steady evolution of the whole bus "package" encompassing:

- **Improved timetables and schedules, information and marketing and with Smartcards to give more attractive fare packages.**

The report opens the door for new bus network proposals for Dublin

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Double trouble in IoW

Huge hike in parking charges prompts boycott

A coach operator is threatening to boycott the Isle of Wight in protest at the more than doubling of parking charges.

In a series of sweeping changes, the Conservative administration has increased daily coaching parking charges across the island to £20, which is twice the previous rate. And drivers will need plenty of change as they will have to feed 20 pound coins into the machine to get the ticket.

Furthermore, there is now no provision for two or three-day coach tickets, with the earlier offer being a four-day ticket, which has risen from £26.40 to £60, an increase of 127%. Buy a ticket for seven days and operators are faced with a 116% increase from £46.20 to £100. It is understood that the original plan was to dispense with the four-day permits so coaches would have been left with paying £20 a day for the first six days of parking.

Now Stuart Ulph, of Brecks International of Rotherham, South Yorkshire, says he is not going to run further tours to the Isle of Wight in protest.

"I think we are being screwed over these rises," he said, "and I cannot understand why they are bringing them in. Coaches are the core business in these shoulder months yet they are doing nothing to encourage them.

"This tour is lightly loaded so I am not going to make any money on it. I am now thinking about dropping the Isle of Wight unless something is done about this.

"We are being charged all this money just to park on a bit of Tarmac and yet there is no security in the coach parks - I had my vehicle broken into last year and diesel stolen the year before."

The angry operator said he contacted the council but they "fobbed me off" and told him that the man to talk to was Ian Ward, the Cabinet member for Environment, Transport and Planning.

Mr Ward told *CBW*: "Parking charges on the Island are substantially lower than elsewhere in the UK.

"When we were drafting our Government-directed local transport plan, we were asked quite specifically by the regional government office what we were doing about parking demand management. You know as well as us that means hiking the car parking charges, so that is what we were pressurised into doing. In fact we have doubled the car parking charges for the normal motorists and they are still cheaper than mainland resorts.

Pilbeam: no success with discussions

"As coaches cause considerable wear and tear on our roads and take up considerable parking space in our car parks we saw no reason why they, and HGVs, should be exempt a similar rise.

"All these permits allow parking in all our car parks for that day, short break or week. The rise works out to no more than £1 per passenger per week, or 14p a day. When you consider that coach companies are discounting holidays by £50 per head for a short break, I cannot believe that £1 per head will cause them too much trouble.

"We have consulted with the hotel trade and reached an agreement that we would retain the four-day permit at £60, that's £15 per day per coach to use any and all council car parks for the day. Again, I cannot believe that that amount split between the passengers - 27p per person, per day - is going to cause coach/holiday companies too much trouble

"We don't expect the coach companies to welcome the rise with open arms but we do believe they are overreacting."

The Confederation of Passenger Transport's coach parking supremo, Bob Pilbeam, toured the island with a Shearings driver about 18 months ago to assess the situation.

He told *CBW*: "I did not know about the increase in parking charges but I have had brief discussions with the council about the inadequate parking facilities for coach in Newport and Cowes.... with no success."

Winter of content with short breaks

Most of us may be still waiting for the first signs of spring but Independent Coach Travel (ICT), the leading London specialist, is looking ahead and has launched its 2006/2007 programme, A Winter's Tale.

City breaks in the UK and Europe are featured, with two-night breaks in London from £59 per person and two nights bed and breakfast in the NH Hotel City Centre in Brussels from £64. A two night Amsterdam break based at the Radisson SAS at Schipol airport costs £69.

A wide range of shopping breaks and Christmas markets are featured and operators looking for something different should check out the themed breaks.

One that should appeal is Wacky Weddings at the Grims Dyke Hotel, near Reading, a three-star property that has long been an ICT favourite. The one-night half-board package incorporates a wedding dinner where nothing goes to plan and it is available for £99 per person on November 11, December 12 and March 11, 2007.

The Grims Dyke Hotel is also offering Gilbert & Sullivan packages for £95 and Murder and Mystery overnights for £96.

Other packages include Fireworks at Ironbridge Gorge on Saturday November 4, when Blists Hill Victorian village will be open for the evening and visitors will be able to talk to characters in period dress. The evening ends with a fireworks display.

The two-night package is based at the Quality Hotel in Walsall and comprises half-board accommodation on one night and bed and breakfast on the second.

■ For copies of the brochure, call ICT on 020 7538 4627.

A royal treat

Groups visiting London this summer can take advantage of a range of special deals from Encore, the ticketing specialist. The spring edition of the tickets guide features entry to Buckingham Palace combined with afternoon tea at the Selfridge Hotel for £22.50 per person.

The new spring tickets guide also lists discounted group rates for all West End Shows, including two new musicals, *Daddy Cool* and *Movin' Out.*

■ For more details of these offers and other packages, call Encore on 020 7439 4000 or visit the Encore website at *www.encoretickets.co.uk*

Ireland hopes to top 5m UK visitors

Tourism officials in Ireland are bullish about growing the number of visitors from Britain to five million this year.

Simon Gregory, the Director of Brand Development & Markets at Tourism Ireland, said: "Reaching the magic five million will be hard work and Britain is a highly competitive marketplace in which to operate. We have put in stream some new initiatives to help us achieve this target, including a new TV advertising campaign targeted at sightseers and culture seekers.

"Last year approximately 60% of all visitors to Ireland embarked on either a cultural or historical based visit."

One major sporting event that should generate coach business is the Ryder Cup that is being held at the K Club in County Kildare from September 22 to 24.

■ For more information go to *www.discoverireland.com*

They don't make 'em like they used to...

Crosville centenary at transport festival

A road run of Crosville buses will be a feature of the three-day Transport Festival that is being held on Bodafon Fields in Llandudno, North Wales, from Saturday to Monday, April 29 to May 1.

There will be around 80 buses entered and the main day of the festival is on the Sunday, which is Crosville enthusiasts' day.

The Crosville Centenary will be marked by a road run of ex-Crosville buses from Rhyl to Llandudno. It will depart the Rhyl events arena at 10.30am and follow the old 409 service to Llandudno, via Abergele, and arrive at the showground in Llandudno at around 11.45am.

Other attractions include steam engines, trade stands, an autojumble and plenty of exhibits. There will be a Sunday evening run from the showground at 5.30pm and street parades on the Sunday and Monday from noon. There will also be a Victorian Extravaganza.

Admission is £4 for adults, £3 for senior citizens and £1.50 for children. ■ For more information email: *info@llantransfest.co.uk* or go to *www.llantrasfest.co.uk*

Events

■ April 5: Getting Active, Getting There – making the links between transport and health. Conference. Bull Hotel, Peterborough. *conferences@landor.co.uk*, 0845 270 7965

■ April 6-7: 30th UK Transport Conference and Exhibition: 'Wasted Miles, Wasted Money'. University of Nottingham. 01223 881622 or *annchapman@CICC-conferences.org.uk*

■ April 7-9: Coach Tourism Council/ Bonded Coach Holidays Conference 2006, Llandudno, North Wales. 0870 850 2839 or email *admin@coachtourismcouncil.co.uk*

■ April 22-23: UK Coach Rally, Brighton, 01753 631170

■ April 24-26: CPT Scotland Annual Conference, Gleneagles. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk*

■ April 25/27: CV Show, NEC, Birmingham. *www.cvshow.com*

■ May 4: Employee Motivation and Incentives, conference, CBI Conference Centre, London. *www.symposium-events.co.uk*

■ May 8-10: ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.

■ May 9-13: Motortec automotive show, IFEMA, Madrid, Spain. *www.motorteconline.com*, +34 91 722 3000

■ May 11: DDA 2005 and Public Transport: Myth and Reality, conference, Sadlers Wells, London. Book online at *www.thewaterfront.co.uk*

■ May 17-18: Coach Tourism 2006, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. *www.coachtourism.com*, 0870 3892903

■ May 21-28: CPT Study Tour, Singapore/Kuala Lumpur. Details: 0207 240 3131

Troubled firm waits on fate

Traffic commissioner hears of maintenance problems at second public inquiry

Traffic commissioner Beverley Bell

Andrew Jarosz, northern correspondent

A number of prohibitions, two unsatisfactory maintenance investigations and an apparent refusal to follow directions brought Cheshire independent A1 Minibus Services to its second public inquiry. Although opinions varied as to whether a condition to limit in-house maintenance to eight vehicles, pending the construction of suitable facilities was a valid condition, North Western traffic commissioner Beverley Bell made it clear that the operator was not working within the spirit of the previous inquiry. With other issues in the balance, including a possible prosecution, Mrs Bell deferred issuing a final decision for twenty-eight days.

Martin Peter Houlton, trading as A1 Minibus Services, based at the Stretton Distribution Centre, Grappenhall Lane, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire, faced a public inquiry at the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, Stone Cross Place, Golborne, Warrington, to consider regulatory action, resulting from an unsatisfactory maintenance investigation, an apparent breach of conditions and undertakings given, material changes, prohibitions, and concerns regarding the question of professional competence, repute and financial standing.

Opening proceedings, Jonathan Backhouse, representing the company, submitted the plea that the apparent breach of conditions should be disregarded, if the condition attached to the licence was an invalid one. Mrs Bell replied that she could see Mr Backhouse's argument, but that did not negate the fact that his client had accepted the condition at a previous inquiry, and would have normally been expected to act in the spirit of the expected condition.

Mr Backhouse also submitted that a recent prohibition could become a matter of prosecution in the future, and that he would prefer that any discussion of the said prohibition be held *in camera.*

What the vehicle examiner said:

Lee Gauckwin, vehicle examiner from VOSA submitted a pre-inquiry report which was accepted as evidence. Mr Gauckwin's report said that he had made a pre-arranged visit to the operating centre on November 3, 2005, and a subsequent unannounced visit to the operating centre on November 10, 2005, and had examined two vehicles on his first visit and three on the second. He had issued advisory notices on three defects on coach CKC 624X which included water leakage and slight play on steering joints, four defects were advised on minibus J129 VAW, and an immediate prohibition on Metrobus D916 NDA, which was showing torn seat covers which exposed bare, sharp metal.

He described the company's recent prohibition history, which included the above prohibition on November 10, 2005, two more prohibitions on March 10, 2006 on double deckers E328 BVO and F119 PHM, and a prohibition on coach J861 COO gained at a school check on March 16, 2006, where three out of four tyres were found to be below minimum tread depth. He said that the prohibitions showed a significant failure in the company's maintenance system.

Cross examined by Mr Backhouse, Mr Gauckwin agreed that he had now seen the one inspection sheet which was missing, which had suggested a breach of the six-weekly safety check interval. He also agreed that the nil defect reporting system was in place.

A second VOSA vehicle examiner Mr Antony Procter gave his evidence *in camera.*

The double-deckers above and right were issued with a prohibition notice on March 10 this year

What the operator said:

Giving evidence, Martin Houlton said that after the last public inquiry in August 2004, he had introduced six weekly checks, and a drivers' nil defect system, with the first driver of the day making a walk round check, but all drivers also checking their vehicles as they took them over during the day. He said that drivers who had been with the firm for over two years had been trained by his previous fitter, and he was arranging training later in April for all staff by a professional consultant. He said that the maintenance was done by a part-time fitter, who worked three or four days per week, and when he was there his own son would work with him. He also used an electrician who could be called in on a casual basis.

Mr Houlton admitted that he had not followed directions at the last public inquiry to the full. In particular there was a condition that up to eight vehicles could be maintained in-house, but the remainder had to be serviced and inspected by outside contractors. He said that he had experienced various difficulties with contractors when trying to book vehicles in for specific dates, and he also considered that when work was done, the standard of work was not thorough enough. He then opened up a description of possible future contractual arrangements, but as this was adjudged to be commercially sensitive, the inquiry went *in camera* for a second time.

Key points

- **The operator, A1 Minibus Services, was not working within the spirit of its previous public inquiry, said the traffic commissioner**
- **VOSA vehicle examiner Lee Gauckwin said prohibition notices issued showed a 'significant failure' in the firm's maintenance system**
- **A written decision is due within 28 days of the inquiry**

Cross-examining Mr Houlton, Mrs Bell reiterated the condition at the previous public inquiry, that no more than eight vehicles be maintained and that the condition could be varied by the completion of suitable undercover inspection facilities. "Why did you not write to me telling me of your difficulties in complying? Why not ring in to the office, or seek advice at the testing station?" she asked.

Turning to maintenance, she asked who the nominated maintenance contractor was: "Since I agreed to increase your authorisation from eight to 12, you have never nominated a maintenance contractor." Mr Houlton replied that the two companies used before were Ashbrook Commercials and Bill Parr, and he didn't think of informing the traffic office when other contractors were used.

Mrs Bell then took a closer look at some of the inspection records. Regarding coach R327 NRU, the records for February 16 said four interior lights out, fogs inoperative. Mr Houlton explained that the interior lights were strips, so that four lights out did not cause a problem, and that there was only one fog inoperative, and he had purchased a replacement, but it was a hard job to fit.

Mrs Bell then looked further back and found references to

continued on page 21

'Poor command of English language' led to problems

Key points

- **Poor command of English and university studies were cited as reasons father and son team failed to manage the business**
- **Traffic commissioner grants three licences to Amberleaf Travel subject to reassurances being fulfilled by Duley family**

by John Clare, CBW correspondent

A family bus company which was due to have its licence revoked has been given a second chance with a smaller fleet.

The Duley family, who own Amberleaf Travel, had their licence revoked by the South East and Metropolitan Area traffic commissioner. But they were given a stay of execution until May so they could submit a new licence application and prove they were fit to carry on in business.

In the meantime the family's operation has moved to Iver in Buckinghamshire and so the new application was made before Eastern Area traffic commissioner, Geoffrey Simms.

At the hearing on Friday, March 24, the Duley's applied for a licence to run five buses, one more than their current licence allows.

Mr Simms heard the company secretary, Parmjit Duley, admit Amberleaf had run into problems due to his poor command of English and his decision to carry out most of the maintenance work on the four buses himself.

Mr Duley told the commissioner this had now changed and in future the company's vehicles would undergo six-weekly checks by a firm of qualified mechanics.

The public inquiry also heard from Mr Duley's son, Palwinder Duley, who had been nominated as Amberleaf's new transport manager.

He had already had one operator's licence revoked and served a disqualification after a bus company he ran while at university got into trouble.

Questioned about this, he said: "I was at university at the time and delegated work to people I trusted at the time, which then proved to be a wrong decision. I was doing a four-year course which did take my attention from the business and that was a big mistake.

"It was down to me. The buck stops with me. I accept that, and I apologise.

"It was a sobering experience and I've learned a lot. I've always been an honest person and it was not done with any ill intent. I consider myself to be of good repute and I hope the transport commissioner does as well."

Palwinder Duley said his management training and his family's life-long passion for the transport industry would help ensure the company, which provides train replacement services and private school runs, operated well from now on.

An independent firm had been called in to audit and monitor Amberleaf's performance.

Mr Simms said it would be "unsupportable" to allow a firm which had its licence revoked in one traffic area to move to another and be granted a licence to run more vehicles.

He said: "That would send out the wrong message. I'm prepared to grant a licence for three vehicles, coupled with the caveat that all the promises given today should be fulfilled.

"Otherwise I might take the view that Amberleaf lacks the ability to operate passenger vehicles in a satisfactory manner."

He added: "This is an opportunity for a fresh start. Both the company and the transport manager have some rehabilitating to do."

Band bus operators 'swap' vehicles

Geoffrey Simms

Key points

- Arena Nightliners says it bought a band bus to hire to Spotlight Travel, run by a friend in the business
- The vehicle was liveried for Spotlight Travel though in Arena ownership. Payment to Arena was to be balance after costs taken out by Spotlight
- Traffic commissioner said bank statements show that Arena had paid the driver, and that there were no formal contracts for the business arrangement
- Inquiry was suspended to allow Arena to reconsider its statements, but on its return, Mr Tunstall stuck by his story
- The traffic commissioner will give his decision at a later date in writing on both Spotlight and Arena's licence

John Clare, CBW correspondent

A coach operator found himself fighting for his licence after suspicions were raised about who was using one of his discs.

Christopher Butler was called before a public inquiry to answer questions about the relationship between his company, Spotlight Travel, and Arena Nightliners, run by his friend Gary Tunstall.

The inquiry heard how Mr Butler's company, based in Haddenham, Cambridgeshire, ran band buses. Mr Tunstall wanted to break into the same business and when Mr Butler said he needed a second coach to run on his restricted licence Mr Tunstall agreed to buy one and lease it to his friend.

Mr Butler told the inquiry he had placed his disc in Mr Tunstall's coach, had it painted in his livery and employed the driver. He had paid the driver's wages and taken a cut before giving the remainder of the money earned to Mr Tunstall.

But Geoffrey Simms, the Eastern Area traffic commissioner, questioned whether this was really what had been happening. He suspected Mr Tunstall had been using one of Mr Butler's two discs to operate his bus without a licence.

In evidence Mr Simms pointed to a letter written by Mr Tunstall to VOSA in support of his application for an operator's licence of his own.

In it Mr Tunstall said he had been "using" one of Mr Butler's operating licences and was now applying for his own as Mr Butler "needed it back". The commissioner also questioned why one of Mr Tunstall's bank statements showed wages being paid to the bus' driver from his account.

Questions were raised about whose disc Arena Nightliners was using

Mr Tunstall said he had worded the letter incorrectly and insisted Mr Butler had been operating the bus and paying the driver.

On the one occasion the wages had been paid from his account it was because there had been a problem with Mr Butler's on-line banking account and he had allowed his account to be used as a favour.

When the commissioner asked to see written proof of the lease agreement between Mr Butler and Mr Tunstall the men said it was a "gentlemen's agreement" between friends and there was nothing in writing.

Mr Tunstall said: "I've known Chris for several years and I didn't think there was any need for an agreement on paper. It was only going to be short-term and it was a gentlemen's agreement.

"I didn't feel I was going to be taken to the cleaners."

Many of the payments made to him by Mr Butler had been in cash, said Mr Tunstall, and did not show up on his bank statements.

The commissioner said: "This suggests to me you have been using the disc. I suggest that the letters accurately describe what happened and realising the problem you have now changed your version of events."

He added: "Can I suggest you and Mr Butler have got yourselves in a bit of a muddle and you were attempting to put it right? Isn't it better to take the option of admitting to this rather than aggravating matters?

"If someone has got themselves into a muddle and wants to put it right I can accept that. But what appears to me to threaten the good repute of both of you is further aggravated by you putting unsupportable testimony to me."

The Commissioner adjourned the hearing for 10 minutes to allow the men to "think about" what they had told him. But when the inquiry resumed Mr Tunstall insisted it was all a misunderstanding caused by his poorly-worded letter to VOSA.

He said: "I don't know how I can prove this, I don't know what we can do really. We thought we were doing everything above board and legal.

"I've not got anything to backtrack on. I don't think I've done anything wrong."

Mr Simms said he would have to consider the matter "on the balance of probabilities". He reserved his decision, both on possible disciplinary action against Mr Butler and on Mr Tunstall's licence application.

continued from page 19

the same problem at inspections on October 13, November 24 and January 5. She also asked why bullseye windscreen clips were being monitored and not repaired.

"What I am trying to see by going through your records, is whether you understand what your full responsibilities are. It seems to me that you see things only in terms of pass or fail requirements," she said.

Summing up for the company, Jonathan Backhouse said the company had stuck by two undertakings given at the last public inquiry, to have six-weekly inspections and introduce a nil defect system. The operator did understand that the commissioner did not want more than eight vehicles maintained on the premises, but circumstances forced him to move away from that, even though that may not be a valid condition, and therefore unenforceable.

"Nine vehicles were looked at in three checks, and there would have been school checks, but the operator wasn't picking up prohibitions willy nilly," he said. "Unfortunately, this year he has picked up some prohibitions. He recognises the problem was with driver checks and his tyres will not be operated at 3mm or below."

Mr Backhouse assured the traffic commissioner the company would not appear at another inquiry, and Mr Houlton had not tried to sweep the problems under the carpet.

"Mr Houlton is saying: 'I know what the issues are, and I will be dealing with it'." Mr Backhouse suggested three possible conditions to improve standards; to have independent training for all drivers before the end of April, to have an independent audit of the driver defect system, and to ensure that tyres were changed when they reached 3mm tread depth.

What the traffic commissioner said:

Replying to the summation, Mrs Bell said that she needed to know how she could trust Mr Houlton to move forward. "Some negative factors weigh more heavily than others, but in this case the circumstances surrounding an S-marked prohibition weigh very, very heavily," she said. "They may be changing tyres now, but they were running them at the limit before," she added.

Mrs Bell said that she was not minded to suspend the licence for a token period like the school holidays, but also said that this was not a revocation matter. She said that she needed time to consider matters and would issue a written decision in 28 days.

Other decisions

NORTH EASTERN

Leeds, February 7
Richard Peter Wasteney T/A Northern Spirit Minicoach, Hull
* PSV - S17 - Formal warning
* PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for - an increase to 10 vehicles
* PSV - S16 condition attached - that all vehicles are normally parked off road when not in use,with exception of one vehicle at 238 Bristol Road

EASTERN

Cambridge, March 2
Premier Connections Travel Ltd, Luton
* PSV - S14 - Application granted for eight vehicles

Cambridge, March 6
Glenn Barry Edwards T/A First Stop Travel, Bury St Edmunds
* PSV - S14 - Application granted for two vehicles

NORTH WESTERN

Warrington, October 31
Craig Robert Jones T/A Hollins Travel, Bury, Lancashire
* PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for

Warrington, January 25
Bon Chaunce Coaches Ltd, Preston
* PSV - S14 - Application granted as applied for.
* Formal warning issued.

WESTERN

Bristol, February 2
Town And Country Coaches Ltd, Newton Abbot
* Licence revoked with effect from 23.59 hours on May 31, 2006, in accordance with Section 17(3) of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981

Bristol, February 2
Associated Coaches Ltd, Newton Abbot
* PSV - S14 - Application refused

Okehampton, February 21
Moon & Benney Ltd T/A Group Travel, Bodmin, Cornwall
* Licence curtailed from 22 authorised vehicles to nine authorised vehicles from 2359 hours on April 7, 2006 to 2359 hours on April 23, 2006, and thereafter to 19 authorised vehicles
* Unannounced visit to be carried out by VOSA, at their discretion
* Warning given as to any further maintenance failures. The following undertakings were given by the operator:-
* Within four months, Mr Benney and one mechanic will attend an appropriate VOSA instruction course
* The operator will, as soon as possible, and in any event within 12 months of February 21, 2006, install rolling road testing equipment

Bristol, February 28
Philip Rendall T/A Rendalls, Bridgwater
* PSV - S16 - Application for variation refused
* PSV - S17 - Warning to operator that any future failure to properly operate his maintenance/ inspection routine will undoubtedly lead to further appearance at public inquiry

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By Roger Pownall

Don't shoot the messenger

Roger Pownall, MD of Cogent Passenger Seating, has his say on a row which erupted over a single advertisement

Cogent Passenger Seating has always supported the CPT and applauds its aims. However the leading article in the CPT News Mail, which appears as a bulletin on the web, describing the Cogent seat belt advert as 'highly misleading' is a most surprising and unwarranted attack on what is universally perceived as a helpful, responsible and proactive company which has always sought to be informative in making customers aware of legislation and regulations and to assist them in compliance.

Sadly the CPT director Steven Salmon, the author of the bulletin, would appear to have misread our advertisement and has indulged in a kneejerk response making totally erroneous allegations. It is also bizarre that this opinion was broadcast without the courtesy of a phone call.

Cogent drafted the advertisement at the end of 2005, after having thoroughly researched the position and having had several conversations directly with the DfT.

A decision to take a full-page advertisement was made so that the regulations could be fully explained.

Mr Salmon says: "It is not true that signs are the only means of informing passengers that belts must be worn," implying that Cogent stated otherwise.

In fact the advertisement states quite clearly: 'A number of methods are permitted'. And it then quotes verbatim from the ministry website: 'But the Department for Transport has proposed that the most cost-effective way to ensure that passengers are ALWAYS informed....is to prominently display signs at every seat...'

Therefore there is no truth in the allegation that Cogent has misled people by suggesting that signs were the only way to inform passengers.

Furthermore, when customers telephone they are specifically told all of the options that are allowed as they have read in the advertisement that a number of methods are permitted. They are also advised that while May 9 was given as the implementation date that this has now been postponed to September. [It should be noted that Cogent believed at the time of the advertisement going to press that the date in May (which Mr. Salmon acknowledges was to have been the date) was correct.] The change to September occurred in the meantime.

To doubly counter the allegation that Cogent is being 'highly misleading' we would like to point out that when the advertisement was drafted we took the trouble to include two websites where the veracity of what was being stated could be checked.

That this article needs to be written at all is sad as both Cogent and the CPT are on the same side and are both interested in promoting and supporting the industry. There is absolutely no case of CPT vs Cogent or of a row between the two.

Roger Pownall is managing director of Cogent Passenger Seating

If there's a burning issue you want to get off your chest, write to Open Platform, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD or e-mail *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk*

However, Cogent has striven for far too long to establish its credentials to see its reputation tarnished in such a casual and off-hand manner. Cogent totally refutes the suggestion that their advertisement was even 'misleading' let alone 'highly misleading' and believes that that heading in the bulletin has given CPT members the wrong impression and has damaged the integrity of a respected company.

In the meantime, even the newly extended lead-time to the date of implementation in September does not give that long for the numerous affected vehicles to become compliant. Operators who choose to go the route of signs on seats rather than the alternatives may still acquire them from Cogent.

The CPT replies: "We don't have a problem with Cogent who, we are sure, placed the advertisement in good faith. But one of CPT's basic responsibilities is to ensure that its members have accurate information, especially on matters like this which have direct practical relevance to operators. Since we knew the implementation date had changed, we had a duty to correct the impression given by the advertisement. Our members would expect nothing less of us."

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE...

Inside line

We meet Veolia Transport UK chairman John O'Brien, who tells us why he could be interested in YOUR business.

PLUS Linda Howard, MD of First Student, talks to *CBW*

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Wedded to cash flow

Regarding Robin Littlewood's *Open Platform* article, the operators asked to quote for the wedding party are very good examples of what is wrong with the industry today.

What sort of operator would hire out any vehicle for around 14 hours and a round trip of at least 140 miles at £300, let alone a double-deck executive? Did this cover standing costs, fuel, wages, wear and tear, depreciation, and a profit? I do not think so. The £500 is a far more realistic figure for a 49-seat standard coach. The wedding car that completed its hire by 1600hrs probably cost in the region of £600.

As for cash flow, with the average standing cost of about £125 per vehicle, one could argue that to take on a hire at £95 would make a substantial contribution towards this figure. My argument would be that you have just increased the cost of that vehicle, as you now need to add wear and tear, fuel and drivers wages to the equation. Every hire should stand on its own merit; an extra hire that fits between existing works should be the icing on the cake.

Instead of cutting each other's throats, coach operators should be seeking to offer a first-class service at a proper price. This would enable investment in the future ie, newer vehicles, better wages for a professional driver, and to generally enhance the overall stature of your company and the industry as a whole. Staffing in the future could become a major worry. What person in their right mind would invest £1,000 to £1,500 in obtaining a PCV license to earn £45 per day?

RD Tabor
Dorset

WIN A BUS! Sort of... Drop us a line and if your letter is chosen as our Letter of the Week, you'll receive a top-notch coach or bus model courtesy of our friends at Corgi. Please try to keep your letters under 200 words. The editor's decision is final.

Going for brokers

In the spirit of dialogue and debate, Richard Godsons' Letter of the Week in *CBW* 723 (March 29) merits a reply.

Taking Richard's comment about unlicensed and unaccountable 'coach brokers', indeed he may be right about some, but Demauris Associates is a limited company, and as such answerable to a board of directors, including a financial director and, more specifically, to Companies House. We do not collect debts up front and pay creditors in arrears. Demauris never sends a coach out with a less than 60% 'up-front' payment and in some cases a full payment.

With regard to my expertise in operating buses and coaches first-hand, I joined the original Midland Red at the tender age of 15, was trained by BET (British Electric Traction Group) and spent many happy years with the former National Bus Group at various locations, including London Victoria Coach Station, which involved extensive pre-planning, and latterly with National Travel East at Sheffield – the successor to Sheffield United Tours. If anyone needed to get an expertise in operating and forward planning the operation of coaches, this latter was the place to be.

Even if the agent does set a rate, that does not mean a coach operator has to accept it. At Demauris we believe that if you pay peanuts you get monkeys, and the first thing that will suffer is maintenance. We try to provide a first-class service – we have been trading for 19 years and we don't want our customers having a scenic tour from the hard shoulder.

Richard Godson is 100% correct in saying that as an industry, coach operators do not promote themselves sufficiently. There seems to be the annual patronage of Yell and they then tend to wait for the phone to ring, and little else.

Brokers or agents like ourselves are having a tough time at the moment in maintaining a creditable reputation due to the widely-reported stories about UK Travel Solutions in Blackpool, but not everyone is like that. As I have said to many an operator, as a broker, if we don't pay our suppliers then we don't have a living.

G. 'Robin' Littlewood,
Demauris Associates Limited

5 YEARS AGO London United faces disruption from a strike over a sacking. Bluebird Travel's coach depot in North Walsham is gutted by a fire.

10 YEARS AGO A consortium involving British Bus has preferred bidder status for Leeds Supertram. Coach operator Hector Boon dies at 68 . Paul Cooper joins Frank Harris.

20 YEARS AGO Leyland launches its premier coach chassis – the B43 Tiger – in Gibraltar with an impressive fanfare. It's followed by a ride and drive in Tangier.

April 5 in history:

1614 Pocahontas marries English tobacco planter John Rolfe in Jamestown

1923 Firestone Tire & Rubber begins producing pneumatic tyres

1955 Sir Winston Churchill resigns as Prime Minister

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If you've got a question and don't know who to ask, our panel of experts can help. We've recruited the best brains in the business to solve your problems, from legal technicalities to cleaning products and the latest legislation to the most eye-catching liveries for your fleet. This week we answer your questions about the new TUPE legislation and the pitfalls to be aware of.

Selling up? Watch out for TUPE

Under new TUPE rules starting this week, you could be liable for a previous operator's employment issues — even injury compensation claims. This week's Q+A expert Peter Woodhouse is a specialist transport lawyer practising at Stone King Solicitors in Bath. Contact him at: pmw@stoneking.co.uk

Q I've heard the rules of transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employement) Act have changed?

A **TUPE provides for the transfer of the seller's employment liabilities to the employees on a business sale. Employment continuity of service transfers to the buyer, and transfer-related dismissals can be automatically unfair. There are also obligations to inform and consult with representatives of the work force before the deal.**

Q I understand that if I sell a part of my business as an ongoing concern, the new regulations are likely to apply, but what happens when I outsource a function currently done in-house?

A **There is a new provision that they now apply to a 'service provision change'. Basically, this means that when you perform a function on your own behalf then send it out to someone else, that is caught by the new regulations. Similarly, when that person stops doing it and either sends it back to you, or loses the contract to someone else, that is also caught.**
Say, for example, you currently have a cleaner working at your depot. He is currently an employee and you want to contract out the cleaning. The new regulations will apply, and, for example, redundancy costs will pass to the new provider of the cleaning services.
Similarly, if you engage a company to provide snacks to your drivers and wish to terminate and either transfer that contract to another contractor or in-house, then again new regulations will apply, and either you or the new contractor will be liable for the employment costs. If the contract with the snack company is merely to supply you the goods, and not provide a service, it won't be covered.

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Carefully evaluate all aspects of a tender

Where bus and coach companies tender for local authority services they need to be very careful and find out what has happened in the past, before they pitch. So suppose that HappyBus has three drivers allocated to one registered service. HappyBus loses that contract and FastBus wins it at tender. FastBus might well find the drivers from HappyBus claiming against it, for say, unfair dismissal and redundancy costs - or demanding to drive the registered service.
Also, one-off contracts are not covered, so a single private hire contract is unlikely to be caught.

Q Where do I go to get information about my tender?

A **There is a new obligation in the regulations on the existing service providers to provide 'Employee Liability Information' to the transferee. This includes details of the employees, any disciplinary procedures and details of any collective agreements that apply. Unless there are special circumstances this information must be given 14 days before the relevant transfer.**

Q What happens if I don't give this information?

A **If HappyBus did not provide the information, then FastBus could make a complaint to the Employment Tribunal who may award usually not less than £500 an employee. Most operators will be concerned to discover that their competitors have such an easy route to claiming against them. You must still, before a relevant transfer, consult the representatives of the affected employees and inform them of what is going on. In practice, this will mean talking to the union representatives as soon as you know that the transfer is going to take place.**

Q I thought if I was getting rid of a business then I was safe, because all liability passed on?

A **While in many cases this is true the new regulations provide that the outgoing and the incoming service provider can both be liable to employees for failure to consult. Both parties can also be responsible for personal injury liabilities in relation to employment before the sale.**

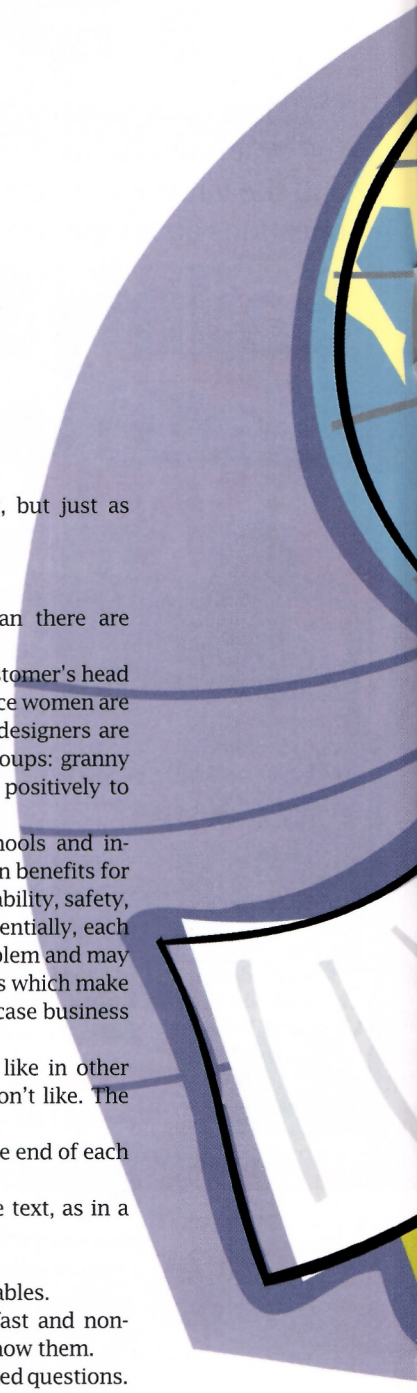
Q So what steps should I take to protect myself?

A **There are five key areas:**
- **When you sell a business/lose a contract, provide the Employee Liability Information to the transferee or the tenderer as soon as possible. Ensure records are kept up to date.**
- **Any contract that is primarily a supply contract, should be in writing, and should say what it is.**
- **When preparing a bid, decide whether you will bid on a TUPE basis or not. Decide what will happen to any affected incoming workforce.**
- **If you don't want TUPE to apply, see if you can change the way the work is done so the business doesn't look the same in your hands as it did before.**
- **As before, you need to think about what indemnities you want and that those indemnities cover the Employee Liability Information.**

PART THREE

The wrotten word

In Part Three of Paul Clapham's marketing masterclass, he turns his attention to brochures. We all produce them, but what do they produce for us?



"Let me send you our brochure." This is probably the commonest phrase used in British business after: "the cheque's in the post."

Sadly, all too often, it's the beginning of the end for a sales enquiry, because many brochures appear to be produced not to elucidate and excite, but to obfuscate and confuse. Let's consider what goes wrong and how you can put it right.

I regularly get the brief: "We need a brochure." Full stop. So, what are you going to do with this brochure? Who will you send it or give it to? What do you want to achieve with it? Ummm, don't know.

With a bit of digging, it transpires that what the client wants is a hybrid: something to use as a private-hire mailer to the public, something to use as a salesman's leave-behind for corporate sales visits. Sorry... they are different tasks, needing different materials. Being realistic, budgets are finite. So make the brochure do the most important of those jobs well and accept that it won't fulfil every objective.

Is a brochure the right approach?

If you want a corporate brochure to generate sales appointments, I question that a brochure is the right route.

Firstly, it's expensive to produce and mail for a relatively small response. Second, if you mail a brochure, the customer probably won't want to see a salesman - he doesn't need to. If the brochure's any good, he knows about your company - you've sent him your brochure, and he's kept it. In this case you want an intriguing mailer that will encourage response and enable the salesman to make telephone appointments.

So, job one is to get the tool you want for the most important task you face. Job two is to get the content right.

Have you got the right content?

In 95% of cases a company will get a designer to help with design, so that the thing looks sharp, interesting and professional.

But for some reason they don't get a proper copywriter to produce the text, or at least to tidy it up. Because everyone can write in English, they think they can write brochure copy. The truth is that I have seen some unholy gibberish in brochures.

A bigger failing is to produce a brochure that is not customer focused. Your brochure should talk about what the customer wants. It should concentrate on benefits, telling the customer the advantages of buying from you. It should also adopt the tone of voice appropriate to the customer group in question: the teens and twenty-something's going white-knuckling at Alton Towers need something quite different to the 50+ holidaymaker visiting the gardens of Cornwall.

There is a cost issue on this, but there's also an opportunity. When you cost a project, include that dedicated mini-brochure. It might raise the break-even point, but just as surely it will more effectively fill that coach.

Does the brochure look right?

There are more ways to present content than there are designers to think of them.

Priority one (as usual) is to get inside your customer's head and think like him, or, more particularly, her since women are major influencers of travel decisions. A lot of designers are young, so be sure to stress those target age groups: granny may be as fit as a flea but she won't respond positively to something that looks like a teen mag.

In the same way, to sell to businesses, schools and in-bound travel organisations, you need to focus on benefits for the business in question. These will include reliability, safety, level of driver training and, naturally, price. Essentially, each of these organisations wants a solution to a problem and may well not understand the operational detail issues which make up your edge. Once again sell benefits - in this case business benefits, rather more than passenger benefits.

A good rule of thumb is to copy what you like in other travel-related brochures and avoid what you don't like. The following I'd suggest as good ground rules:

- Use bullet points to summarise your text at the end of each section.
- Don't be afraid to highlight key words in the text, as in a selling letter.
- Brevity beats long-winded prose every time.
- Choose short words in preference to polysyllables.
- Avoid jargon and buzz words - they date fast and non-experts involved in decision making may not know them.
- Use that popular website device, frequently asked questions.

And while on the subject, get your eventual designs produced in PDF format, and you can make the brochure downloadable from your website.

Are your pictures the best?

A picture paints a thousand words, it's said. Well, yes. Sometimes they're not very flattering words.

Too often, brochures show marginally relevant photographs "because we've got them". They also show poor quality photos taken by an amateur and these are, frankly, worse than useless, because they can harm the overall effect. If a brochure is worth producing, it's worth getting professional pictures.

Tourist boards and tour wholesalers are quite good at offering copyright-free (ie no cost) images, but take your

> **Your brochure should talk about what the customer wants. It should concentrate on benefits, telling the customer the advantages of buying from you**

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HEADROOM 2.005m to 2.155m
FRONT OVERHANG 2.920m
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ENTRY HEIGHT 0.350m
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ENGINE MAN D 2876 LOH 20 (Euro III), water-cooled 6-cylinder 4-stroke diesel engine with direct injection, common-rail injection.
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GEARBOX 12-speed automated manual gearbox TipMatic with Intarder, EasyStart hill-holder and shunting mode (series), manual control possible via multifunction steering wheel
BRAKE SYSTEM EBS 2 electropneumatic brake with ABS and ASR, disc brakes all round, electronic brake assistant, electronic stability program ESP
ADDITIONAL BRAKE ZF Intarder activated before the service brake, with control from stalk switch or via foot button; integrated constant braking system and MSC (Maximum Speed Control), effective even downhill
FRONT AXLE MAN VOS-08-B-01 multi-arm axle, independent wheel suspension with open wishbone and stabiliser
REAR AXLE MAN HY-1336-B hypoid axle with four control arms and four air-suspension bellows, i = 3.36
TRAILING AXLE MAN NOL-06-B rigid axle, adhesion steered
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designer's advice on whether they are any good. For pictures of your own vehicles and staff, hire a 'pro' on a day rate (£300 is about right) and work his socks off. Get him to supply ALL the images he's taken on CD, and make sure you have bought his copyright within the rate.

Illustrations can help spell out specific points and add variety to a brochure. As with every element of your brochure, don't overdo it. Less is more, and that applies to both words and pictures.

Consider what your brochure is going to be printed on. Paper and board come in myriad forms and part of the presentation, part of the message can be achieved by using a distinctive paper stock: the look and feel of a brochure conveys quality (or lack of it).

For example there are some very impressive metallic finishes, lots of unusual grainy finishes and clear or semi-opaque stocks. They are more expensive than standard art paper, but if they make the content more memorable, then it is money wisely spent. Your printer can get hold of samples or you can go direct to the likes of Arjo Wiggins or McNaughtons.

There are lots of clever design and production features - paper engineering - that can distinguish your brochure from the run-of-the-mill. Cut outs, cutaways, pop-ups. You may think that these add to the quality of your brochure, or it may just look like designer whimsy that creates added cost. A good designer or printer will have examples for you to look at. One of them might be just the magic ingredient that makes your brochure special.

What will your brochure do?

The final points about content relate to contact details and call to action. Ask yourself what you want people to do when they read your brochure.

If it's "place an order", then give them a detachable order form to fax or mail back to you. If it's a phone call to your booking staff, feature the number on every page.

Definitely put all your contact details together, including direct dial numbers - these people are important, they're customers. This is commonly the last page, but it doesn't have to be just there. If it makes sense, put such details in the main text.

Picking a printer

When you come to selecting a printer, there is no golden rule; there are so many of them.

Try to pick proven quality as well as price. Incidentally, if you're not used to the terminology, printers' quotes are a bit of a minefield. Don't be embarrassed to go through them with the estimator or sales rep to make absolutely sure that he's quoting precisely what you want. Look out for extra costs like standing time if you miss a print slot

> **"Illustrations can help spell out specific points and add variety to a brochure. As with every element of your brochure, don't overdo it. Less is more"**

Don't overbuy. If 500 copies cost £500 and 1,000 cost £650, it looks like no contest. Ha! That's how printers make profits. If you only want 500, then buy 500. Your customers don't buy spare seats because they're a bargain.

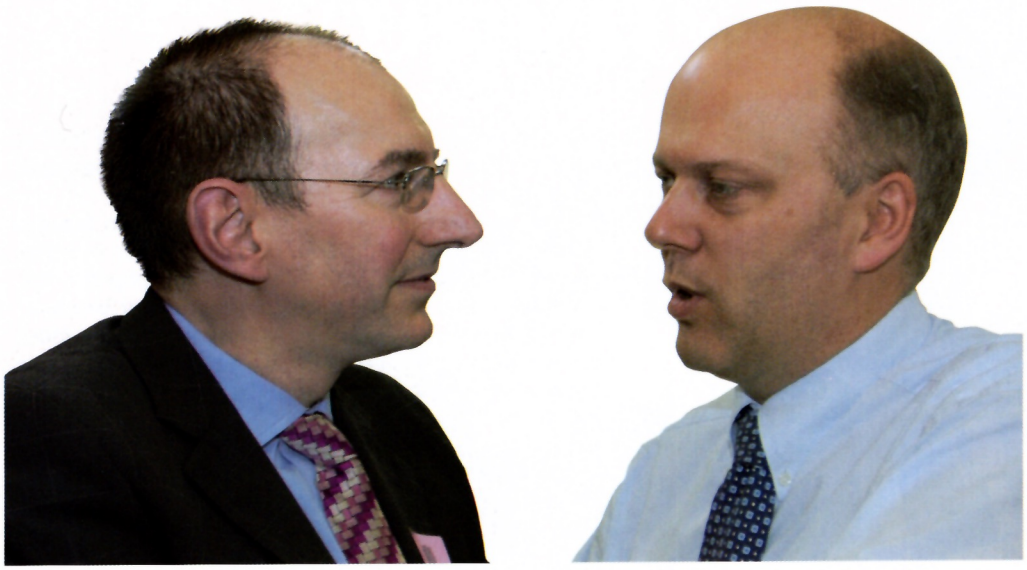
If the brochure is a real success, you can always print more, using the money you've made from the first orders to pay for them, and your reprint in this case would probably cost about £250. This also gives you the chance to update the detail. Conversely, having 500 unused brochures in your stock room is a regular reminder of wasted money. Predictably, printers never tell you any of this.

In the design stage you will have plenty of opportunities to make changes but, finally, comes the pre-press proof. Go through it with a fine-tooth comb. This is the most expensive time to make changes, but it's also the last.

You may not like a colour when you see it in this real life form. Change it. Check for typos - spelling mistakes. Get someone else to read it. Don't be rushed.

Then use it. Whatever volume you order, plan to use the lot, fast. They're supposed to be sales tools, so get them working. I am constantly amazed at the way some companies hoard their brochures and end up with two-, three- or four-year-old supplies lying around. Whatever aim you've set for it, it should be used at every single opportunity. Starting the day it's delivered.

Paul Clapham is a marketing consultant with over 25 years experience, working with a wide range of businesses, on an even wider range of projects, both in the UK and overseas. He has run his own consultancy for the past nine years.



Grayling on Grayling

CBW asked leading left-wing transport academic Tony Grayling, from the Institute of Public Policy Research, to grill new Conservative shadow Minister for Transport Chris Grayling on transport policy. Perhaps the most fascinating thing to come out of their conversation is that the new guy really seems to know his brief...

Tony: You've recently taken over the job of leading on transport for the Conservative Party, so what do you see as your key priorities, and what do you see as the big issues for transport?

Chris: The two big issues for us to address are first of all capacity and secondly the environment. We have a transport system that is bursting at the seams every which way you look. We have to get to grips with the capacity problems we've got and look at developing the existing system so we can cope with future demand. At the same time, while the needs of business and the freedom of choice of individuals all dictate the future growth of transport, we've got to balance what happens with the environmental issue. It's no good travelling more and more and destroying the planet while we do so. I guess my priorities are to address these two issues. We need a clear short- as well as long-term transport strategy. It's all well and good talking about road pricing post 2018 - the truth is though that we need things to happen before then. I think there is a frustration today at the lack of progress.

T: You are on record as saying over the last few years the Conservative Party lacked an overall transport strategy – how are you going to put that right?

C: It's my goal when we go into the next election that people like you are looking at our transport strategy saying: "Umm, this is good stuff, I am interested in this." I want that to be the case not simply for my party, but I want to seize the transport agenda from the government as well, because it has underperformed on transport. It has promised the Earth and delivered very little. For all its talk about long term strategy there is precious little substance on what they are planning to do.

T: One of the things the government has done is to increase spending on transport year on year up until 2015. We might need more investment in transport to achieve the increases in capacity you are talking about. Are you therefore supportive of the government's commitment on that front?

C: I'll believe that commitment when I see it - most immediately there is a substantial drop in funding between 2006/7 and 2007/8. There has been a bit of a jump this year but then it comes down again, so I'm sceptical. I've looked through the Red Book and the IFS's Green Budget quite carefully to try and square this promise that we're going to get 2.25% above the rate of inflation every year till 2015. I don't believe it - I think this is a promise with a big question mark.

T: Is that something you would support if it were to happen?

C: I'm not convinced the issue is about overall spending levels - there is a lot of money being spent today. The public subsidy for the highways budget in the last three or four years has gone up from £3bn to £5.5bn; the public funding for public transport in London has gone up by £1bn in total. My big question, and the question Alistair Darling should be addressing, is why do we seem to be getting so little for that? So before we pile in and say we need to spend more, more, more, the aim is to start by getting value for what are pretty big increases in what we are spending at the moment.

T: Your Conservative colleague Roger Evans, chairman of the London Assembly Transport Committee, recently produced a report that found that in London we are getting value for money in terms of the bus service, and that the Quality Incentive Contract structure London has works well. Do you agree with his analysis, and do you think it's a model others could look at?

C: I think this is one of the three central issues for buses are far as I am concerned, in fact probably two wrapped into one. On the one hand, there is clearly an issue about the amount of bus funding that there is going into London, compared with overall support for buses nationally. There are a lot of people outside London who think that London is getting the better deal by a mile.

In terms of quality contracts, I know the PTEs are all desperate to take control of the bus networks. I am reluctant to see complete control over bus networks and I'll tell you why. ›

Right: Chris Grayling MP pictured at Portcullis House, March 28. Photos by Dave Boughton.

The transport academic

Tony Grayling is associate director of the Sustainability team at left wing 'think tank' the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) in London. His areas of interest are the environment and transport.

Prior to joining IPPR he was special adviser to Gavin Strang MP, Minister for Transport, and Labour Party policy officer. Before this he was a researcher to Anne Campbell MP and Ron Davies MP. He was awarded a PhD in plant sciences in 1990 from Cambridge University.

He has had articles published in *The Guardian, Financial Times, Independent on Sunday, Mail on Sunday* and the *New Statesman*. He has made numerous television and radio appearances, and was a speaker at Landor Conferences', 'Bus Regulation: Partnership, Contracts or a Third Way' conference in February (*CBW*, February 2)

There is clearly an issue about the amount of bus funding that there is going into London

I remember a meeting when I was on the Select Committee with a guy from Bristol, a newish small bus operator. He was a bus driver. He said: "I was driving my bus and I looked around the area I was driving through and thought, nobody is doing that, there is clearly demand for this bit. I know what I'll do, I'll buy a bus, and I'll do it myself." At the time I spoke to him he had six buses, and was serving part of the area.

I would hate to see an environment where regulation was put back into a shape where that can't happen. The problem is that if you have a totally regulated structure, somebody can only get into the bus market by going through the tender process against the big guys, and the chances of success in that environment are quite small.

> I am naturally disinclined to see the situation where we really have buses back to being contracted to politicians

T: Isn't the counter argument though that in most parts of the country we have a natural monopoly where you've got a dominant operator. Isn't the problem that you get exploitation of a natural monopoly which means you run buses on key routes, but you neglect the network of services that might get people to where they want to go more conveniently?

C: There are two routes you can go. You either give the PTEs control over the network so they have contracts for every route as per London. Or you encourage competition to come in and challenge the monopoly. I have not formed a judgement at this moment in time - there are pros and cons with both. I am naturally disinclined to see a situation where we have buses back to being contracted to politicians.

T: One of the things you have mentioned already is the PTE/ PTA's desire to have more control over bus services. There is clearly an emerging agenda within government to strengthen those sub-regional authorities. To perhaps have city-region authorities that are integrated in respect of their powers for transport, economic development, planning and perhaps other things as well. Is that something you are interested in?

C: I am highly suspicious about it. There are aspects of transport where it clearly makes sense for cities to have an overview. Buses are clearly one. I've no qualms about the PTEs having oversight and being the promoters of tram schemes for example. I can even understand the case for coordination over road policy. The danger of coordination over roads policy is that it ends up spending all the money in the city centre and the suburbs, which may not be politically friendly at the time, lose out. I wouldn't want to commit to making changes there without spending a lot of time looking at it.

I understand there is an issue.

T: Can I turn to one of the big national debates, about the role of road pricing in the longer term.

C: We are going to look at it very carefully. I've said very clearly I regard Conservative transport strategy for the next three years as being pretty much a blank sheet of paper. We would be irresponsible if we didn't look carefully at road pricing. We're looking now at what is being done in other countries.

It would still be quite a big step for us to sign up to the grand Alistair Darling vision; I am sceptical about whether what he is saying is either realisable or desirable. Whether it is really practical to put a black box in every single vehicle in the country, track wherever they go, collect the data, process it, send out the bill and collect the money I think is highly questionable. I think it's a gargantuan task; it's a far bigger scheme for example than identity cards.

Probably a far bigger scheme than anything any government has tried before anywhere in the developed world, frankly.

I'm not opposed to the use of road pricing or congestion charging in principle. I'm not convinced they are always right and I want to look very carefully whether they are a sensible part of managing the system.

T: If we can just look at that a little bit: obviously we've got the one significant scheme in Central London and a small one in central Durham – do you support schemes of that kind?

C: Would I like to see them adopted? There's a real danger in national politicians saying to individual cities and communities: "You will do...". Look at what is happening in the West Midlands - Alistair Darling is effectively blackmailing the local authorities to take part in the road pricing pilot. He's basically said there will be no money for transport improvements in the West Midlands unless you sign up to this. Now I don't think that is a satisfactory approach to policy making. You take people with you. I think the decision to introduce

When Grayling met Grayling. Talking issues in the MP's office.

The Shadow Transport Minister

Chris Grayling was first elected to the House of Commons in the 2001 General Election, as MP for Epsom and Ewell. Immediately on becoming elected he served on the Transport Select Committee for 18 months before his promotion to spokesman on Nutrition, Obesity and Complimentary Healthcare and then Shadow Higher and Further Education Minister.

A member of David Cameron's inner circle, he was made Shadow Leader of the House of Commons after the election in May 2005, and then joined the Shadow Cabinet as Shadow Secretary of State for Transport after Cameron's election as party leader in December 2005.

Born in 1962, he grew up in Buckinghamshire. He was educated in High Wycombe before going to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, to read history.

After university, he joined the BBC's News Training Scheme, and worked as a producer on BBC News and Channel Four's Business Daily before joining international communications firm Burson Marsteller as European marketing director.

He has written several books including a history of the Bridgwater Canal, Anglo-American relations, and life in England after the First World War.

Chris Grayling and Tony Grayling met only once before, when Tony appeared before the Transport Select Committee.

> [Road pricing is] a far bigger scheme than anything any government has tried before anywhere in the developed world

congestion charging should come from the bottom up, not the top down.

T: There were some limited measures in the budget last week to encourage people to purchase more fuel-efficient vehicles and there was more detail announced on biofuels. Are those two avenues that you think we could do more or less about?

C: I think biofuels are a significant opportunity in the future with a very, very big caveat. One thing we must not do in any circumstances is drive for biofuels and end up importing cheap biofuel source material from areas of the world that are clearing the rainforests to do it. There is a huge danger that this will happen. That would be disastrous - to flatten rainforests to have green fuel in our cars is absolutely not the way to go about sorting out the problem.

T: How do we avoid that?

C: I think we can go a bit further on biofuels than the government says. The National Farmers' Union says farmers can produce to about 7% of fuel need in this country. I think that's highly desirable. I don't want to see all of our agricultural land disappear, there may be a time when we need it. I welcome what the government has done, but I'm anxious that I don't hear enough talk about the limitations of biofuels, to make sure we don't end up clearing the rainforests to grow the materials we need.

T: A big issue in relation to contribution to green house gas emissions is aviation – currently not subject to any regulation in respect to carbon emissions, fuel taxation or VAT on tickets. Would you support the introduction of aviation taxes if they were targeted at cutting emissions and protecting the environment?

Chris Grayling works from Portcullis House, on the corner of Bridge Street and Victoria Embankment, just across the street from Big Ben. An audit of MP's office space in the 1990s resulted in the need for a new office block in addition to the Houses Of Parliament, and Portcullis House was finished in 2001. It was developed in conjunction with the new Westminster tube station, on which it sits, separated by a huge slab of concrete to make it bombproof.

The building houses 210 MPs – around a third of the total. Unofficially, each party is given a floor each of the five-story building which is arranged around a central courtyard. The ground floor is given over to a restaurant called 'The Adjournment', a café, 'The Debate', and a snack shop, 'The Despatch Box'.

C: The great difficulty with aviation emissions is that they have got to be done internationally. There do need to be sensible serious international discussions about aviation taxes, and I'd certainly want us to be part of that in government post 2009.

To me, aviation is the most difficult part of what is in development because there aren't simple answers. My initial thought is that there is a strange contradiction between the government's policies on roads and on aviation. With roads they are saying: "You can't predict and provide, we will seek to use pricing mechanisms to limit demand". Yet with aviation they are saying there is huge potential demand for the future, therefore we are building runways. Those are completely inconsistent. I want to be much more sceptical about future aviation growth than the government has been. I'm not saying I'm anti-aviation, but I think there is a real question mark about it.

T: Transport is problematic in respect of green house gas emissions which are growing from the road transport sector as well as from the aviation sector. One of the possible ways ahead would be to include these sectors in the emissions trading scheme, the Government recently wrote to the European Commission asking whether road transport can be included.

C: Emission trading is desirable up until a point - it is not a solution. It is a step on the way. What it doesn't do is tackle the emission levels in the individual sectors so aviation may pay the price for emission reductions elsewhere. But we don't have the big smokestack industries we once did so just how much scope there is for emissions trading to tackle the problem I'm not sure. I'm not opposed to emissions trading used as a tool, but I don't think it's the only way of doing it, I certainly don't think it will be the main way.

> It's my goal when we go into the next election that people like you are looking at our transport strategy saying: "Umm, this is good stuff, I'm interested in this"

T: As a party you have set up a number of policy commissions. Two of them are relevant to your agenda, the economic policy commission and the quality of life policy commission. At one end you have got John Redwood in charge of one, and at the other you have got radical environmentalist Zac Goldsmith. Can you see those two things coming together?

C: I think that's a strength of the process, you need to be grown up about these things. There are big conflicting issues we want to deal with and let's not pretend otherwise. Balancing the desire to travel and the economic need for infrastructure with the environmental pressures is not easy. Making these conflicting pressures very explicit in the form of two groups who will probably send different messages is a strength not a weakness. It's my job to sit in the middle and shape that into a coherent and balanced transport strategy.

T: So you will take the final decision?

C: Yes, our policy groups are advisory not prescriptive. They are there to challenge us, to prompt new ideas; they are not there to define what we do. We are not sub-contracting policy making to people outside the Shadow Cabinet.

T: Finally, when can we expect to see a new Conservative transport strategy published?

C: It will evolve rather than arrive in a bang. I do feel strongly that we have to have a clear context against which we are working. So we have commissioned research into what Britain will look like over the next 25 years, where businesses are going to move, where they will seek to invest, where we will get inward investment, where people are going to choose to live, how the demographics are going to change. You'll see a series of announcements between now and the election that build into a coherent strategy. Behind it there will always be consistent messages and a consistent sense of direction. But we will not do everything at once.

VOLVO B10M **VAN HOOL ALIZEE**

Simonds' Volvo Van Hool Alizee has done 312,238 miles in its 10-year life and satisfied owner Martyn Simonds says he can see it still going in another decade's time

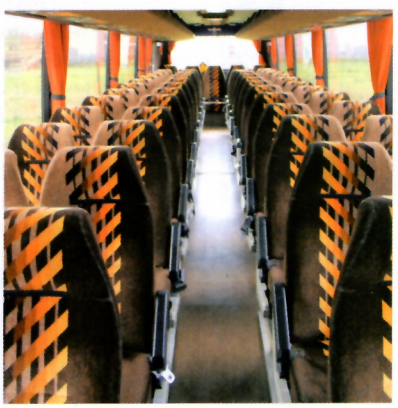
Still going strong

Martyn Simonds of Simonds of Botesdale rates his 10-year-old Volvo Van Hool Alizee

Owner's comments: We already had a 57-seat B7R and wanted something with more power to back it up, especially on continental work. It's still performing as well as when we bought it, and on the same type of work. Drivers love it because the B10M is very easy to drive, and we believe the Van Hool/Volvo combination is very good. We believe it is a better vehicle than our 57-seat B7 Plaxton Prima. What impresses us is the general flexibility of this vehicle. It's at home carrying parties of school children long distances, but legroom is sufficient for private hire, and it can be depended upon to do anything. We have a great relationship with the Volvo agent, Driffields of Bury, and in Ely, and we carry impress stock from them... Hence our devotion to Volvo. This vehicle has never had a roadside breakdown, and we can see it being on the fleet for another 10 years.

What would you buy new to replace it? The new equivalent is a B12B Van Hool Alicron, the same standard as this was at new. If we had to replace it for its current duties, we'd look at a Scania Irizar S-Kool 70-seater or a B7R Plaxton Profile.

Driver comment: The B10M has always been a good vehicle to drive, the mid-engined configuration giving useful engine noise feedback so you don't have to watch the rev gauge. The motor is powerful, with impressive torque, so pulling away uphill is easy, and the positive manual gearbox allows for snappy changes. The Van Hool part of the package offers good build quality, reflected in low road noise, good ride and passenger satisfaction.



FACT FILE

Chassis Volvo B10M
Body Van Hool Alizee
First registered April 1, 1996
Owner Simonds of Botesdale, Norfolk Since October 16, 2004
Paid £66,000
Major modifications None
Current mileage 312,238 miles
Mileage in current ownership 57445 miles

PROs & CONs

Costs last 12 months:
Total £9,079
Service interval: 5 to 6 weeks
Major bills (over £100):
Engine relay. Split pin to o/s/f brake chamber yoke. Clutch drag link. Exhaust silencer and bracket. O/s/r front air bag. Seat retrim. Tyres to rear axle. Speedlimiter. N/s/f slack adjuster. Front tyres. Front hub oil seals and brake linings.
Average mpg: 9.35mpg
Breakdowns: None

- ☺ Quality Van Hool bodywork
- ☺ High capacity (57 seats)
- ☺ First owner (Wicksons) kept the vehicle clean and tidy
- ☺ Drivers like B10M
- ☹ Prefer plug door to inswing type

Current condition

Panels and bodywork
★★★★½
Repaint in December 2004 has lasted well. Some vinyls peeling Some evidence of corrosion on lower edges of panels

Seats and flooring
★★★★½
Original moquette now dated, and showing signs of wear

Driver area
★★★★½
Driver seat retrimmed at acquisition

Engine and gearbox
★★★★★

Key

- ☺ Positive points
- ☹ Negative points

- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★½ Very good
- ★★★½☆ Good
- ★★½☆☆ Poor
- ★½☆☆☆ Very poor

Have you taken delivery of a new vehicle and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *jack.thorpe@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3

THOMAS OF BARRY

When it secured a contract to supply the Cardiff City team coach, Thomas of Barry looked hard at the options available.

"For this contract we wanted something special," says Colin Jones, coach and tours manager. "Key requirements were that the coach had to have three axles and plenty of luggage space to handle the vast amount of equipment a football team carries with it, and the manufacturer had to be able to provide a high-quality vehicle built to our specification."

The choice was Setra, and EvoBus UK has supplied Thomas with the most luxurious coach the company has ever operated - and what is probably the highest-specification coach in Wales.

The coach is a 13m Setra S416 GT-HD and it is fitted with just 36 leather-trimmed seats. There are six tables, a fully-equipped servery, and a floor-level walk-in washroom. Flat-screen monitors receive Sky TV and can be used to show DVDs or linked to the coach's satellite navigation system, allowing passengers to see the information being displayed to the driver.

"The coach has had a tremendous reception," Jones said. "It has raised the profile of our company, and has also secured new business for us."

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Setra S416 GT HD integral
Engine MB OM 457 LA Euro III
Transmission ASTronic
Seats 36
Spec Tables, air con, Sky TV, servery, walk-in washroom
Bought from EvoBus UK 02476 626000

THE KINGS FERRY

Two Setra Comfort Class S416 GT-HD coaches have joined the fleet of premier south-east operator The Kings Ferry.

"The Setra is perceived as a premium brand," said The Kings Ferry managing director Steve O'Neill, "and we wanted to evaluate the new Comfort Class to gauge reaction from our customers."

Initial feedback has been very positive, both from customers and from drivers.

The Setras are being used primarily on corporate hires and on The Kings Ferry's own tour programme.

With 53 seats in an overall length of 13 metres, the Comfort Class coaches live up to their name with added legroom and part-leather Ambiente seats. The seats closest to the aisle can be slid out by one inch, giving passengers even more space.

Other features of the coaches include air-conditioning, washroom, TV/DVD system, satellite navigation which can be relayed to passengers through the TV screens, and a coffee machine. A reversing camera is fitted for added safety.

"It's a very good specification," O'Neill added, "and it is ideally suited to high-class touring."

The two new coaches were supplied with EvoBus's Europe-wide Omnibus aftersales support, providing parts, service and repair facilities tailored to specific operators' needs.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Setra S416 GT HD integral
Engine MB OM 457 LA Euro III six-cylinder in-line
Transmission ASTronic
Seats 53
Spec Air con, reversing camera, washroom, sat nav, DVD/TV
Bought from EvoBus UK 02476 626000

FISHWICK AND SONS

The VDL Bus Van Hool combination operated by John Fishwick & Sons proved so popular with their own tour passengers that they have recently taken delivery of another coach to the same specification.

Fishwick's gets the 12.6-litre, Euro III engine coupled with ZF auto gearbox. Based on the proven chassis/body combination of VDL Bus SB4000XF and Van Hool Alicron T9, the specification includes climate-control, 42 reclining seats with leather headrest and trim, folding tables and magazine nets. The coach has a rear servery with fridge and hot drinks machine, and rear floor-mounted washroom. Full-width carpeting and a vacuum cleaner system ice the cake.

FACT FILE

Chassis/Body VDL Bus SB4000XF/Van Hool Alicron
Engine SB4000XF 12.6L
Transmission ZF 5HP602
Seats 42
Spec Leather headrests, folding tables, magazine nets, rear servery, washroom, climate control
Bought from Arriva Bus & Coach 01274 681144

Motor premiums falling

Some fresh competition and improving claims experience has reversed the recent trend, say operators

The situation of motors premiums rising at as much as 30% year-on-year seems to have halted, with brokers and operators now reporting price reductions.

The increasing use of on-board CCTV to monitor both the inside of the vehicle and the outside is helping insurers defend spurious claims and, coupled with better risk management and some changes of ownership of big insurers, has led to an improvement in rates.

One operator *CBW* spoke to reported that his premiums had dropped 10% this year, and another that he needed to apply very little pressure to see a more competitive quote: "There's definitely been a softening of rates on motors insurance," said one Midlands operator, who had also benefited from a large reduction for membership of an elite trade organisation.

"That said, motors is the smaller part of the whole, which includes other third-party liabilities. And that area of insurance is getting more costly."

"There's certainly been some good news on the premiums front for consumers," said Belmont International's John Savidge. "It's down to increased competition - chiefly the gradual introduction into the market of emerging syndicates, which are now getting some capacity. If you have a well-run fleet with a good claims experience, the insurers will bend over backwards to get your business. The market has dropped back sharply."

CCTV combined with tracking has reduced spurious accident claims

Mr Savidge said the sale of Ensign - the biggest in the stage carriage market - to Australian giant QBE last year, and other changes in ownership, had shaken

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up the system.

One operator told *CBW* he is still concerned that some insurers seem uninterested in defending suspect third-party claims: "They just settle out of court, and that leads to my premiums going up."

A Home Counties operator we spoke to said his small London bus fleet generates an average of three fictitious insurance claims a week, almost all of which can be disproved with CCTV. GPS tracking can also be used to prove the precise whereabouts of vehicles, and get early closure of spurious claims.

But Mr Savidge said operators should be wary of letting principle over-rule economic sense: "The eventual decision rests with magistrates, and obviously you can end up spending a huge amount of money if the decision goes against you," he said.

"The good news is that 'soft tissue' injury claims such as whiplash injury can now be properly diagnosed, so it's no longer necessary to take the claimant's word."

Be creative with finance

With sustained low interest rates and steady performance from the markets, money has rarely been so easy to come by.

Getting a competitive deal is a question of looking at the full range of options in the context of what's planned for the vehicle, and no matter what your previous buying pattern has been, that should involve a consideration for leasing.

Some companies, like Hansar, even offer a combination of options with one deal.

Its Choic3s plan demands that you make a £25,000 minimum advance and then regular hire payments, but at the end of a variable period, allows you to either hand the vehicle back with nothing to pay, pay a fee and the remaining value and own it, or finance the remainder.

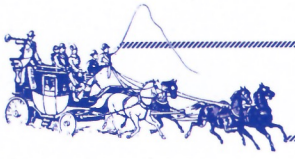
Packages like these make sense where you win contracts and can't be sure of getting contract extensions. Hansar says its Choic3s scheme should also allow you to claim writing-down allowances as you are the implied owner, and the interest paid can be added as a revenue expense in P and Ls to reduce taxable income.

As with many lease agreements, the risk on the residual value is borne by the finance company, and that may be a real help if the vehicle is of an unproven type. If you're on the winning side of the predicted residual value, finance lease can return the profit from the sale of the vehicle at the end of the agreement. On operating lease, you have the simplest of all equations; you're in effect paying off the depreciation of the vehicle and nothing else, and it goes back at the end of the lease with nothing to pay.

Hire purchase, perhaps combined with 'balloon' payments to keep monthly outgoings down can suit longer-term business and offer good tax efficiency with eventual ownership of the vehicle.

There are even 'seasonal' lease deals which reflect the income from coaches. In summer, when the vehicle is at peak earnings, your payments peak. In winter, the reduced working is reflected in your expenditure.

Loans can, of course, be secured against your business and properties, and there's nothing to beat a good relationship with your bank. But the expertise and buying power of many leasing companies takes some beating in the value-for-money stakes.



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STERTIL GOES WI-FI

Stertil Koni is launching its innovative ST108W wireless vehicle lifting system at this year's CV Show.

The system brings total flexibility and allows columns to be used in any configuration around a vehicle. With no power or communication cables to connect, set up time is considerably reduced and the system is operational much quicker.

Each column has a separate control box and delivers lifting capacity of 8,200kg. It means the weight capacity can be increased simply by adding more columns.

Lifting speed is geared to raise the working height up to 1.85m in 89 seconds. Lowering speeds are pre-selectable and each column can be lowered manually in the event of a power failure.

In line with previous Stertil Koni lift sets, the ST108W employs a maintenance-free synthetic runner wheel system which is self-lubricating and covered by a lifetime guarantee. The company also guarantees parts back up for at least 25 years.

■ *www.stertiluk.com*
Call: 0870 770 6607
e-mail: *lifts@stertiluk.com*

SAFETY FIRST AT CV SHOW

Roadlink International says it will major on ranges of safety-related products at this year's CV Show.

Key products will be Koni shock absorbers, Conti-Tech air springs, OCAP steering and suspension components, Beral friction linings and Brembo braking system components.

Roadlink stocks over 450 different applications for Koni shock absorbers alone.

Roadlink also offers an exchange service and will take in serviceable shoes in part exchange.

■ *www.roadlink-international.co.uk*
Call: 01902 636206

MASTERNAUT TEAMS WITH DOLPHIN

Masternaut has linked its web-based scheduling, vehicle tracking and mobile resource service to Handheld's Dolphin 7900 microcomputer.

Regarded as one of the most rugged PDA-like portable devices available, the Dolphin connects to Masternaut via an in-vehicle cradle to become a live data communication and GPS navigation terminal suited to a large number of mobile operations.

Dolphin makes use of Microsoft's Windows Mobile software which connects with Masternaut's M-Schedule, M-Opti-time, and M-Delivery despatch systems as part of a real-time booking, despatch and reporting system. Operators can track the whereabouts of the vehicle in real time and drivers can make use of GPRS satellite navigation in addition to receiving any schedule or itinerary updates. Dolphin also provides a minute-by-minute log of all activity including movements and timesheet data for use in management reports to determine vehicle utilisation and reduce operating costs.

■ ***www.masternaut.co.uk*** **Call: 0113 281 4000**

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SOVEREIGN AIMING TO GROW

With plans to out-grow its current site and a growing list of major bus company contracts, Sovereign Autos says it's going places.

The Colne, Lancashire engineering company which specialises in engine rebuilds has been refurbishing buses from Stagecoach, Arriva, First and others, and is negotiating a deal for warranty work for a major manufacturer.

"We've built our reputation on being the best," said owner Andrew Camp. "We have shared facilities at the moment, but I'm keeping an eye out for commercial premises in Preston.

With four on the shop floor and still recruiting, Mr Camp says he's set himself a target of having six service vans on the road within six months: "And I'd like to try to improve our image with newer vans," said Mr Camp, whose company currently runs three and a heavy 'wrecker.'

Among special work undertaken by Sovereign are replacement, stronger axles for Dart and a modification to ensure B6s don't overheat.

■ Soveriegn undertakes any engineering work on buses. Contact the company on 01282 869328, or mobile 07940 116427

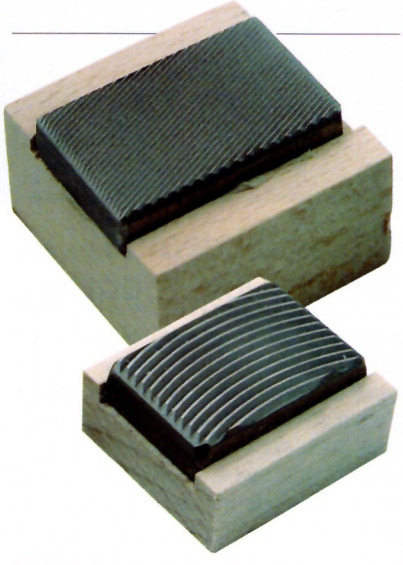
NEW INTERFACE FOR INTERFACE

Interface and Furtex fabrics can be selected at the touch of a button with a new point-and-click website.

The site lets buyers browse in their own time, selecting from the massive range of fabrics and styles within the two brands. Each moquette is shown in situ on a bus to give a visual impression of the eventual result.

Once registered, customers can also order samples on-line: "The site also includes in-depth technical information for specifiers to really get into the detail of what they might need," said Terry Colbert, business development manager, transport, for the company.

■ Log on to www.furtex.co.uk/catalogue. Or telephone: 01924 490591.



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DAVY ENGINEERING LANDS TRW AGENCY

Steering and suspension component maker TRW Automotive Aftermarket has chosen Solihull-based Davy Engineering as stockist for its aftermarket components.

Launching at the CV Show at the NEC on April 25, Davy says the tie-up is particularly important, as TRW supplies most of the country's major bus groups with OE parts, and now Davy's 12,000 ft² warehousing centre will be able to offer a next-day service on TRW spares.

TRW
TRW
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(DE) Lenkung und Aufhängung NKW
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(GB) CV Steering and Suspension
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TRW is a massive concern, running factories in Europe to supply manufacturers OE. It has 300 aftermarket patterns, which between them cover 80% of the existing fleet in Europe, it says. Products include tie rod ends, drag links, track rods, v links, repair kits and radius rods.

"We are pleased to be adding the prestigious TRW name to our portfolio and excited to be the sole distributor of the programme in the UK," said Davy's MD David Evans.

■ Contact Davy Engineering on 0121 709 0298 www.davyhq.com

NEW IRTEC LICENCES FOR ADVANCED AND MASTER TECHNICIANS

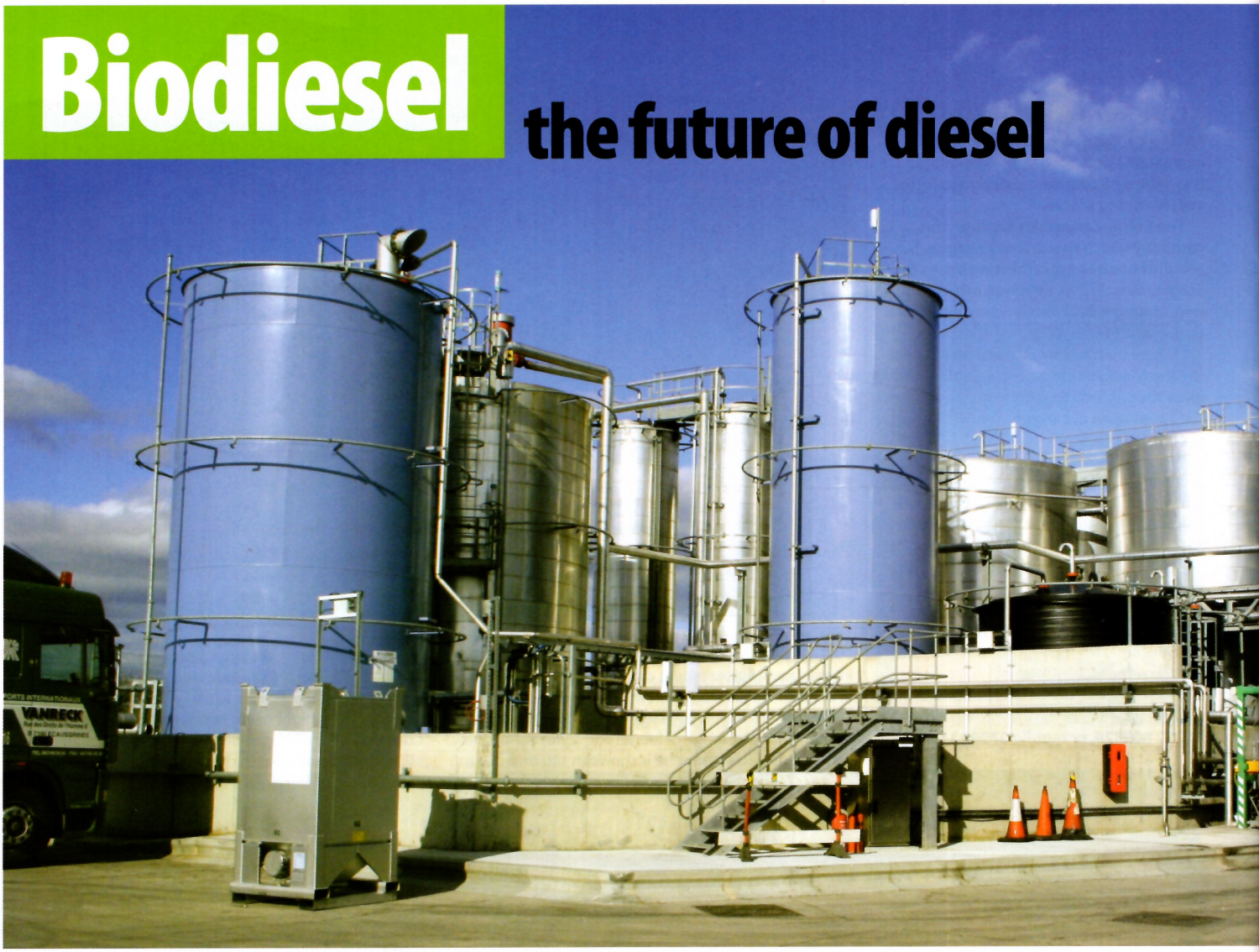
IRTEC, the accreditation scheme for commercial and passenger vehicle technicians, celebrates six years of success at this year's CV Show with the launch of new licences for advanced and master technicians. The organisation will also reveal a facelift and new website at the exhibition – Stand 2250.

IRTEC is a renewable voluntary testing and assessment scheme which certifies the theoretical and practical skills of vehicle technicians and offers a series of supplementary licences. IRTEC licences certify a commitment to safety and demonstrable professional development by both the technician and employer.

■ Further information about the scheme can be obtained through the IRTEC website at www.irtec.org.uk (currently under development) or by calling 020 7630 1111.

IRTEC is administered by the Society of Operations Engineers. www.soe.org.uk

Biodiesel the future of diesel



As oil prices soar and stocks begin to shrink, alternative fuels will become essential. And biodiesel is looking a very likely option, as Martin Cole reports...

Diesel, as a mineral-based commodity, is heading for major price increases in the future as oil stocks around the globe begin to dwindle.

Conventional production can sustain demand for some years but the long-term forecast is not promising and is the reason governments are beginning to look at ways of extending its life - notably through a 5% blend with biodiesel via the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO). A recent study by consultants predicts Europe could be facing a 20% shortage of diesel by 2015.

The bus industry ran trials with biodiesel some years ago and although they showed it to have potential there were concerns about odour and sticky residue which served to gum up fuel injection systems and jeopardise reliability. The majority of these trials were based on fuels derived from sources such as used cooking oils and rapeseed oils and most of the problems associated with their suitability have now been addressed with the development of improved distillation processes.

In order to gain acceptance of blended diesel at the 5% rate, the government has introduced higher Bus Service Operators Grant subsidy to local bus operators and community transport since October 1 2005.

The new rate is 37.96p/litre - the same as applies to Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel and it replaced the old rate calculated on the basis of rates of fuel duty applying to the elements of the blend. This meant payments for biodiesel were below that of conventional fuel. The grant rate for unblended biodiesel remains at 27.1p/litre - 100% of the fuel duty levied.

The changes were designed to encourage operators to take on a more environmentally friendly alternative to conventional diesel which would help to preserve global stocks and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases by incorporating fuel derived from renewable sources. Increased take-up of biodiesel would also help in the bid to meet emissions targets set in the Kyoto Agreement.

The EU set a target of 5.75% of transport fuels to be derived from plant sources by 2010 - and the UK government signed up to this. However, it has not yet achieved anything close to its modest target of biodiesel replacing 2%. So far it has only managed 0.3% compared to an EU average of 1.5% and best results of 15% from Germany and Sweden. This means in order to meet the terms of the directive there is much to do in developing a production platform to obtain vastly increased amounts of biodiesel with which to blend, in increasing percentages, with mineral-based stock.

Argent Energy

The largest UK-based producer of biodiesel is Argent Energy. Based on the outskirts of Motherwell, the company is a new enterprise - yet already capable of producing over 900,000 litres per week - which is 50% of the current UK output. Argent can use many different material sources to produce biodiesel but is mainly reliant on a local source of tallow which comes from rendered animal by-products. This is supplemented by used cooking oil from around the country.

The company was formed in 2001 to take advantage of the opportunities available and has taken on the exclusive rights to a distillation process perfected by BDI of Gratz, Austria.

The possibilities for success achieved grant support of €3.2 million (£2.2 million) from the EU and a Scottish Executive grant of £1.2 million to build the plant and develop an efficient production process by the second quarter of 2005. The work was completed by March 2005.

Argent Energy vice chairman Jim Walker CBE, said: "We produce a very high quality biodiesel which meets the EN 14214 requirements. We can certify our product on-site and most is being sold as a 5% blend. We intend to have two vehicles of our own running on 100% biodiesel this year and will use them as mobile test facilties.

"Our main hurdle at the start was convincing operators biodiesel would have no detriment to their everyday operation. We knew there had been a poor side to biodiesel manufacture - much of it produced by what could be described as 'back-street' processes - which led to poor engine reliability and other problems. It was clear we needed to deliver top quality fuel and that's why we worked closely with BDI and took on the present distillation process. It is streets ahead of previously available biodiesel and we believe there are very few UK suppliers capable of producing it to the same standard."

Recent contracts signed with fuel distribution specialist Petroplus mean Argent's biodiesel is now available in blended stocks across the country and the company has already ramped up its production to deliver a minimum 41.5 million litres in 2006. This does not take account of other customers Argent supplies.

Walker believes the current success of biodiesel is just the tip of the iceberg and can see many transport operations, passenger and haulage, committing to using biofuels as a means of achieving their carbon reduction targets. He confirmed a number of bus operators were expressing serious interest.

He is also convinced the government is keen to move beyond the 5% target for 2010 and, as such, is under pressure to expand the business in order to meet what could be an explosion in demand - especially if operators can obtain certification of using low-polluting fuels and those sticking with conventional diesel may well have to pay a premium.

The move to 10% blends is expected to be officially sanctioned soon - once agreement is reached about blends being accepted into the standards, following discussions at EU level in the CEN Standards working group. There has already been an announcement by the German Motor Manufacturers Association supporting such a move.

As a consequence, Argent is already proposing to build other UK plants which will see output grow by three or four times.

In tests, the company determined engines could run on 100% biodiesel but the 5% minimum blend is sufficient to give operators a bonus in that it burns more efficiently and with reduced emissions. Significantly, it also reduces the carbon footprint of the fuel being consumed. Biodiesel with blends of just 1.5% to 2.5% restore the lubricity of the fuel which was severely reduced with the removal of sulphur to create ULSD.

Argent is also working with specialists to come up with a range of additives suitable to ensure effective 'winterisation' of biodiesel. Jim Walker said: "Our trials have shown no CFFP (cold fuel filter plugging) problems at all and we've operated it in temperatures down to -14°C. We are confident the biodiesel will more than match any of the properties attributable to ULSD."

Useful by-products from the production process at Motherwell are 5,000 tonnes of technical quality glycerine and 1,100 tonnes of fertiliser.

But is it realistic?

With the price differential between biodiesel and ULSD negated there is now no real reason why commercial operations should not consider its use. Rather, they should seize the advantage and take any benefits there are in terms of improved fuel efficiency and the ability to tender for contracts with an extra bargaining chip - low carbon emissions and an environmentally friendly operation.

FACT FILE

- **Biodiesel is less toxic than table salt and as biodegradeable as sugar**
- **Biodiesel requires no changes to the logistics of the fuel supply chain in the UK or to vehicle engines**
- **The RTFO legislation is predicted to save around one million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in 2010 – equivalent to removing one million cars from the road**
- **Biodiesel improves engine lubrication and burns more completely – reducing carbon dioxide emissions**
- **Biodiesel is virtually sulphur-free and should offer longer engine life**
- **Fuel efficiency improvements are claimed to be 1.5% -2.5% although a trial by Gateshead County Council returned a range of improvements between 4.9% and 13.23%**

Above: Argent's state-of-the-art facility utilises the latest distillation technology from BDI of Austria. Left: Argent Energy vice chairman Jim Walker CBE

'CPT deserves the credit'

Seconded from the Department for Transport to the CPT, Stephen Heard has a unique view of the political landscape. Before he retired, Mark Williams caught up with him for a no-taboos exit interview

When the Confederation of Passenger Transport was looking for a new policy advisor, former Parliamentary private secretary Stephen Heard was the top name on its list.

His predecessor David Watson and current deputy director general Simon Posner, both former civil servants, knew Heard through their association with Steven Norris MP, erstwhile minister for transport in John Major's government.

Latterly, he was involved with setting up the Greater London Authority and the new mayor's post but, by 1996, Heard was looking for pastures new, and - on 'secondment' - engineered himself a package which placed him on the other side of the political fence.

"The DfT agreed to a six-month trial," said Heard in an exclusive interview with *CBW* on the eve of his departure... after a five-year stay at CPT. "I came to CPT as an advisor on policy. I was there to give an inside line to CPT and vice versa. I have to admit the media role took over a bit."

The change was massive: "It's a much smaller working environment than I was used to... very close to the front line of commercial activities, and you can't hide behind officialdom," said Heard.

He rates the relationship which has been forged with government very highly: "I think the industry has as close a relationship with government as it's ever had. It has helped that Simon Posner and I have both worked in Whitehall. The CPT can now talk openly, and because of that we have achieved a lot."

Heard doesn't credit himself with the achievement, but Simon Posner: "I have no doubt that without his work behind the scenes in the last 10 years the industry would be regulated. He is brilliant, and has consistently out-manoeuvred his opponents, and saved the industry millions."

Heard says government doesn't want demands shouted from the rooftops: "Our form of lobbying takes place in a way people know won't embarrass them." He says that the industry doesn't necessarily understand the way government works: "It quite often can't understand why, when it asks, it doesn't get. And that's not a criticism. A coach operator who spends most of his day in the yard can't be expected to [understand]. Operators are street-fighting entrepreneurs, but being aggressive and blunt - a great business tool - doesn't get what you want."

Stephen Heard spoke to *CBW* on the eve of his retirement

> "Simon Posner has consistently out-manoeuvred his opponents"

Heard says the key to the successes he has witnessed has been the close alliance with civil servants: "It's what the PTEs get wrong all the time. Early day motions through backbenchers are wasted effort. It's not the way things are done any more... it's the equivalent of graffiti.

"Our way has been more subtle and more focused. Leadership may come from the top, but if you understand a transport minister's schedule, you'll know it's pretty punishing. He's got 10 people to see every day, and civil servants deal with the important issues - suggesting all the best ideas on single sheets of A4 paper.

"Sure, you can see the minister, but he'll take much of his advice from civil servants, and to get influence, you've got to be part of that process."

Heard says the industry is basically healthy, despite the problems which have hit coaching in the last two years: "It must always look to coach operators that they are being victimised, and new laws arranged to make life difficult. But the safety culture which has hit everyone is across the board - all small businesses.

"I think a leaner and healthier coach industry will emerge. But the coach sector should avoid trying to get any help from government. If you take its money, it will want to intervene and control. At the moment, the industry should be happy it hasn't got government looking over its shoulder.

"As for the bus industry, I think it needs to address its image still further, and not always have the appearance of being on its back foot, worried about being shafted. It could be much more positive about what it does, and have some confidence in its own product."

Does Heard actually like the industry? "Oh yes. Someone once told me that at the Hilton on CPT dinner night, you could tell the CPT guests from the others by the fact that they wear anoraks over their tuxedos. It's an industry dominated by hard men with a gloomy view. It's time to cheer up; the industry is under a Labour government that is giving it as much freedom as under Tory transport minister Nick Ridley. It's got everything to play for."

> "It must always look to coach operators that they are being victimised"

New MD appointed at Yellow Buses

Derek Lott has been appointed as the new managing director of Bournemouth-based Yellow Buses. The appointment, which takes immediate effect, follows the company's acquisition by Transdev, the UK's sixth biggest bus operator, in December 2005.

Mr Lott, who was previously chief operating officer of London United and London Sovereign, has headed Transdev's transitional team in Bournemouth for the last three months.

He has been involved in the bus industry for 35 years, joining as a driver in 1971 and then becoming an inspector before moving into a variety of senior management positions.

Derek Lott, managing director of Yellow Buses.

He was appointed operations director of London United in 1997 and chief operating officer of London United and London Sovereign six years later.

Mr Lott described Yellow Buses as "a great company with a terrific staff."

He added: "Now that it is under Transdev's ownership, I am looking forward to providing a quality service to our customers and developing the business in the years ahead."

Yellow Buses operates a fleet of 110 buses and 14 coaches with a staff of 300. It carries more than 9m passengers a year with its vehicles operating over 5m miles across the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch area.

McKenna given big Arriva task

Arriva plc has announced the appointment of Dom McKenna as group development director.

Mr McKenna will work closely with executive directors and take a lead on delivering Arriva's future strategy, in particular identifying and pursuing acquisition, joint venture and partnership opportunities.

Mr McKenna will also work closely with senior managers throughout the Group to identify and agree areas where customer and business benefit will come from applying common systems and approaches. His team will also drive procurement, IT, and engineering safety standards across the Group.

Mr McKenna will report to David Martin, group managing director – operations and deputy chief executive.

Mr McKenna said of his appointment: "I am looking forward to the challenges this role will bring. Arriva's businesses throughout Europe have excellent local managers and are constantly finding ways to improve local transport. By applying common systems and approaches we can maximise the benefits of being an Arriva company for the ultimate benefit of all our customers."

Mr McKenna previously held the position of managing director with Arriva's Vehicle Rental division which was sold to Northgate in January 2006. Before joining Arriva, Mr McKenna was operations director for Parcelforce Worldwide. In this role, Mr McKenna was part of the team returning the company to profitability through improved customer service, reduced costs and targeted organic growth.

Paul Rogers

Paul's a 21st Century boy

21st Century has appointed Paul Rogers as sales and marketing director to bring the company's wireless CCTV systems to a wider market.

21st Century has over 3,000 systems in operation. Paul will be bringing 21st Century's portfolio of technology, which includes ProGuard (an enhanced CCTV system which links with Black Box technology in a WiFi environment to allow operators to monitor activities of staff and passengers) and Heartbeat (a maintenance programme that remotely and automatically monitors the operational status of CCTV systems), to a wider audience.

Mr Rogers said: "This is a very exciting time for the company, as it has demonstrated its capabilities by leading the market in the development of wireless CCTV and auto-video download systems. The future lies in enhancing the technology through wider applications and utilising the company's excellent installation and maintenance capabilities."

Paul joins 21st Century from Wayfarer Transit Systems, where he was sales manager.

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New man at helm of NABI

North American Bus Industries, Inc (NABI) has appointed Robert M Shaughnessy as the new president and CEO of NABI following the closing of the sale of NABI last month.

Mr Shaughnessy has replaced former acting president and CEO of NABI, Andy Racz, who has retired, after leading the NABI group for 12 years

"I've worked in the transit industry before and am excited about this opportunity to join NABI," said Mr Shaughnessy, a veteran of the transit bus and truck business.

"I'm impressed with NABI's proven and innovative product line and am optimistic about the future of the company."

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Butler would be proud

Reg Varney is alive and well and living in Derbyshire by the sound of it.

In true On The Buses style, a driver was caught allegedly having sex with a woman on his double-decker.

Unfortunately for him (and her) the bus was parked in a turning bay at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ashbourne and the pair were spotted at it by pupils.

Pupils reported the incident to teachers who in turn called police, who are investigating.

The 56-year-old driver has since resigned from his job.

You've been framed

If you ever needed proof that CCTV is worth its weight in memory chips, here's a story to warm the cockles.

Steve Whiteway of Epsom Coaches told *CBW* that a BMW sailed into the yard a few weeks ago, and its owner jumped out and made his way straight to the reception, demanding to see the manager.

"One of your bus drivers just cut me up, and I'm going to sue you," he said.

The duty manager explained that he'd investigate the claim straight away, and that this should be easy to do since the bus was fully-equipped with CCTV camer....

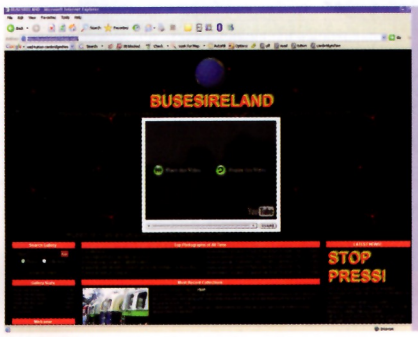
And before the sentence was finished, the motorist left the office, climbed into his car and drove away never to be seen again.

Guide dog banned

A former Travel London bus driver was stunned to be told he couldn't get on the service he used to drive - because he had his guide dog with him.

Graham Henley, 53, of Hayes, lost his sight in 2001 and has even appeared in a government leaflet to illustrate that guide dogs must be allowed on buses.

A TfL spokesperson apologised and has asked Travel London to investigate.

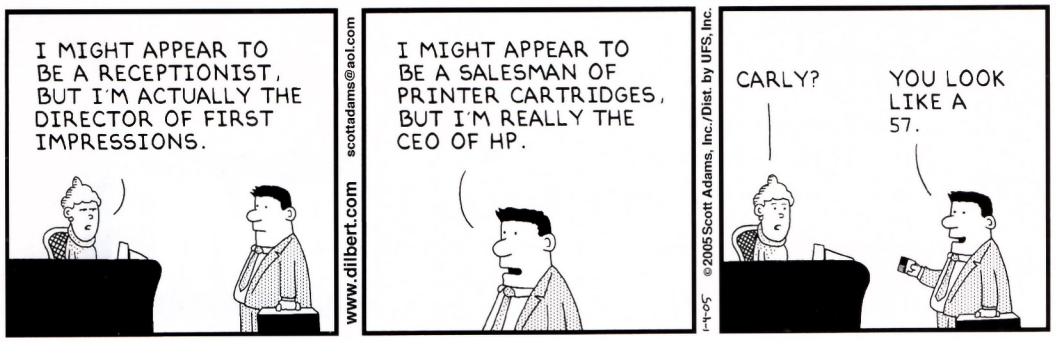


Googled...

http://busesireland.fotopic.net/

If you're an enthusiast looking for a completely mad site, Busesireland must be the maddest. The homepage takes ages to load due to having dozens of images and even a video running on it. You can get a picture of any bus in the Translink fleet by entering the registration, it says, and the whole thing is dotted with pictures of anything old. Busesireland shows what can happen when several hundred eccentric people put their minds to it....

Dilbert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Two minute interview

Full name Nick Warner
Age 44 (but feel and act 24!)
Occupation Semi-retired owner of Boomerang Bus/company director/landlord
Will there be more passengers on coaches and buses in the future? There will have to be. It's going to happen, but perhaps not in my lifetime and in the quantity we want
Who will they be? We are all going to travel on a bus or coach. Park & Ride works, London works, and the concessionaries will be having a field day soon
Which recent legislation has been most irritating or useless? Where do I start... this is only a two-minute interview. I suppose that prohibiting people from working hard is probably the most irritating
Give the industry's business managers 20 words of helpful advice... Concentrate on the job of serving the public, ignore the legislation and bureaucracy because you're there to provide a service, and to satisfy a government target
When you got your first job in the industry, was it love at first sight? Yes, and I would love to still be in it, but I can not abide those who do not understand the industry trying to tell me how to do it
Which vehicle – coach, bus, motorcycle or car – do you love the most, and why? Has to be the first vehicle my grandfather started it all with – a 1926 Thorneycroft charabanc
At your ideal dinner party, what would be the main course? A tall, blonde 22-year-old. Failing that, thick, rare fillet steak

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